THE CARNAL MIND

Understanding the Flesh and Walking in the Spirit

A Bible Study with **Kimberly Dodson**

Let's begin at the beginning and allow the Scriptures to establish the subject as we move forward.

The Carnal Mind

I. Man In the Beginning

Before we can understand the carnal mind, we must first understand **man as God created him**. Otherwise, we could easily mistake man's fallen condition for man's original nature.

The first statement concerning man's nature and origin is:

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..."
Genesis 1:26 KJV

And again:

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."
Genesis 1:27 KJV

When creation was complete:

"And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good."
Genesis 1:31 KJV

This establishes our beginning.

Man was **created by God**, **in the image of God**, **after His likeness**, and God pronounced His creation **very good**.

There was nothing carnal about this condition.

There was no enmity against God. There was no sinful nature being described. There was no spiritual death. There was no alienation between God and man.

Therefore, whatever the **carnal mind** is, it came **after man's creation**.

II. Another Mind Appears

Genesis 3 introduces the serpent.

"Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said...?"
Genesis 3:1 KJV

Immediately we see something contrary to God.

God had said:

"...thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."
Genesis 2:17 KJV

The serpent said:

"Ye shall not surely die:"
Genesis 3:4 KJV

These are not merely two different opinions.

One is **the word of God**.

The other directly contradicts **the word of God**.

Then the serpent continues:

"For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."
Genesis 3:5 KJV

The serpent is introducing a way contrary to God: distrust God's word, reject God's boundary, and desire something outside what God has given.

This becomes very significant when we eventually reach Paul's description:

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God..."
Romans 8:7 KJV

We are beginning to see the principle of that opposition long before Scripture gives us the expression **"carnal mind."**

III. The Woman Begins to Look According to Another Measure

Then comes a very revealing verse:

"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise..."
Genesis 3:6 KJV

God had already said what was to be done.

But now we see:

good for food

pleasant to the eyes

desired to make one wise

The decision is no longer being governed simply by what **God said**.

Something is desired because of what it offers to the flesh, the eyes, and the desire for wisdom apart from obedience to God.

Much later John describes something strikingly similar:

"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."
1 John 2:16 KJV

Compare them:

Genesis: **good for food**
John: **lust of the flesh**

Genesis: **pleasant to the eyes**
John: **lust of the eyes**

Genesis: **desired to make one wise**
John: **pride of life**

We should be careful not to make Genesis say more than it says, but the correspondence is certainly worth observing as we follow the subject through Scripture.

Then:

"...she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat."
Genesis 3:6 KJV

Disobedience occurred.

IV. Sin and Death Enter

Now the New Testament tells us what happened in Genesis:

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin..."
Romans 5:12 KJV

The word **entered** is important.

Sin was not presented as something inherent in God's original creation of man.

It **entered**.

Death likewise **entered through sin**.

Paul says again:

"For if by one man's offence death reigned by one..."
Romans 5:17 KJV

And:

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners..."
Romans 5:19 KJV

So now we have a clear dividing point:

Before the fall: image and likeness of God; very good.

At the fall: disobedience.

Through that disobedience: sin enters.

Through sin: death enters.

That is the beginning of the condition we must trace if we are going to understand the carnal mind.

V. The Two Seeds

Immediately after the fall, God speaks to the serpent:

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed..."
Genesis 3:15 KJV

Now Scripture introduces something that will continue developing throughout the biblical record:

the serpent

the serpent's seed

the woman

the woman's seed

and **enmity between the two**.

This is important to our study because the Scriptures later speak very plainly about two spiritual parentages.

Jesus tells certain men:

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do."
John 8:44 KJV

Notice particularly that their **works and desires reveal the father whose nature they are manifesting**.

John later makes the distinction explicit:

"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil..."
1 John 3:10 KJV

And immediately before that:

"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning."
1 John 3:8 KJV

This gives us something very important concerning the origin of sinfulness.

John does **not** trace sin back to God's original creation of man.

He says:

"the devil sinneth from the beginning."

And Christ came for this purpose:

"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."
1 John 3:8 KJV

VI. Cain Shows Us the Two Ways Beginning to Manifest

This distinction begins appearing immediately in the next generation.

Cain and Abel both bring offerings to God.

"And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:"
Genesis 4:4 KJV

But:

“But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.”
Genesis 4:5 KJV

God speaks directly to Cain:

“If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door...”
Genesis 4:7 KJV

Cain then kills Abel.

The New Testament tells us something Genesis alone does not explicitly state:

“Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother.”
1 John 3:12 KJV

That phrase deserves our attention:

“Cain, who was of that wicked one.”

Why did he kill Abel?

John continues:

“And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.”

Again we see **two manifestations**:

Cain's works — **evil**

Abel's works — **righteous**

And Scripture says Cain was **“of that wicked one.”**

So very early in the biblical record, the distinction God announced in Genesis 3 is already becoming visible in people's lives.

VII. The Inner Condition Becomes Manifest

As mankind multiplies, Scripture eventually says:

“And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth...”
Genesis 6:5 KJV

But God does not stop with outward wickedness.

He identifies what is happening **inside**:

"...and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

Now we are approaching our subject directly.

The problem is present in **the thoughts of the heart**.

After the flood:

"...the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth..."
Genesis 8:21 KJV

The Scriptures are beginning to show us what happened after sin entered the world.

What began with disobedience in Genesis 3 is now manifesting itself inwardly in man's **desires, imaginations and thoughts**, and outwardly in his **works**.

And that gives us a natural place to stop this first section.

We have not yet needed to define the carnal mind from Romans 8. **We are watching Scripture build toward it.**

So far the progression is:

Man created in God's image and likeness → the serpent contradicts God → man disobeys → sin enters → death enters → the two seeds are declared → the two ways begin to manifest → wickedness appears not merely in outward actions but in the thoughts and imaginations of the heart.

Next I think we should continue forward through the Old Testament and see what Scripture says about **the heart, man's thoughts, his own way, wisdom in his own eyes, and resistance to God**. That should allow the Bible to develop the anatomy of the carnal mind before we ever ask Paul to give it its New Testament name.

We have followed the subject from creation through the fall, the entrance of sin and death, the two seeds, and the corruption appearing in the thoughts of the heart. Now we can continue watching what Scripture reveals about **how this fallen mind operates**.

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VIII. Man Begins Following His Own Way

One of the clearest characteristics appearing throughout Scripture is the contrast between **God's way** and **man's own way**.

Solomon writes:

“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”
Proverbs 14:12 KJV

This is particularly significant because the way does not necessarily **seem evil** to the person walking in it.

It *“seemeth right.”*

That takes us directly back to Eden. The tree appeared *“good for food,” “pleasant to the eyes,”* and *“desired to make one wise.”*

The problem with the carnal mind is therefore deeper than deliberately choosing something while knowing it is wrong. **Man's own judgment can tell him that his way is right when it is contrary to God.**

And notice the outcome:

“...the end thereof are the ways of death.”

Again we encounter **death**.

Later Paul will say:

“For to be carnally minded is death...”
Romans 8:6 KJV

That connection is becoming increasingly clear.

IX. Trusting Our Own Understanding

Another passage develops this further:

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.”
Proverbs 3:5 KJVSis

Then:

“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”
Proverbs 3:6 KJV

Here are two very different ways of operating.

One **leans upon its own understanding**.

The other **trusts God and acknowledges Him**.

This does not mean God gave man a mind that should never reason or understand. Scripture repeatedly commends wisdom, knowledge and understanding.

The question is **what governs that understanding**.

Is my understanding submitted to God?

Or does my own understanding become the final authority by which I judge what God has said?

That distinction began in Eden.

X. Wise in Our Own Eyes

Scripture repeatedly warns against something closely related:

"Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil."
Proverbs 3:7 KJV

And:

"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise."
Proverbs 12:15 KJV

Again:

"Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts."
Proverbs 21:2 KJV

Notice how frequently **eyes, ways, heart, and understanding** occur together.

Man sees something.

Man evaluates it.

Man concludes that it is right.

But God sees the heart and knows the truth of the matter.

That is why the carnal mind cannot ultimately be identified merely by asking, **"Does this seem right to me?"**

The very mind doing the evaluation may itself need correction by God.

XI. The Heart Cannot Be Its Own Standard

Jeremiah takes us still deeper:

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”
Jeremiah 17:9 KJV

But notice the verse immediately following:

“I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins...”
Jeremiah 17:10 KJV

The answer to the deceitfulness of man's heart is not greater confidence in the heart.

God searches it.

This is why Scripture repeatedly turns man's attention away from self as the final measure and back toward God.

David understood this:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:”
Psalm 139:23 KJV

Then:

“And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”
Psalm 139:24 KJV

Notice again:

heart → thoughts → way → God's way.

That pattern appears repeatedly.

XII. Self-Will

Isaiah gives us another description:

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way...”
Isaiah 53:6 KJV

That little expression says a great deal:

“his own way.”

Carnality is not restricted to obvious wickedness such as murder, adultery or theft.

At its root is departure from God's way toward **our own way**.

Isaiah says elsewhere:

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts...”
Isaiah 55:7 KJV

Notice that both are mentioned:

his way

and

his thoughts.

Then God immediately explains the contrast:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.”
Isaiah 55:8 KJV

And:

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”
Isaiah 55:9 KJV

Again Scripture connects **thoughts with ways**.

What a person thinks eventually governs how that person walks.

XIII. The Mind Can Become Alienated From God

The prophets also show us that persistent rejection of God affects man's understanding.

Jeremiah says:

“For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding...”
Jeremiah 4:22 KJV

The problem is not merely intellectual capacity.

They *“have not known me.”*

Isaiah describes people who:

“...have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not...”
Ezekiel 12:2 KJV

That same principle will become very important when Jesus speaks of people who have ears but do not hear and eyes but do not see.

There is a spiritual blindness associated with departure from God.

XIV. Something Else Appears: The Stony Heart

Now we come to something extremely important for understanding why salvation requires more than outward correction.

God promises through Ezekiel:

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you...”
Ezekiel 36:26 KJV

Then:

“...and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.”

And what follows?

“And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes...”
Ezekiel 36:27 KJV

This is far beyond God merely giving mankind another set of rules.

Something must happen **within**.

A new heart.

A new spirit.

God's Spirit within.

And then comes the changed walk.

That prepares us beautifully for Jesus' words:

“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”
John 3:3 KJV

The new birth does not suddenly appear in the New Testament without foundation. God had already promised an inward work.

XV. The Old Testament Begins Pointing Toward a New Mind and Heart

Jeremiah gives another promise:

“But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel... I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts...”
Jeremiah 31:33 KJV

God's law would no longer merely confront man **from outside**.

God would perform something **within**.

That becomes important when we eventually reach Paul's statement:

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."
Romans 8:7 KJV

The answer is not merely placing more law before the carnal mind.

There must be an inward transformation.

XVI. We Can Now See Several Characteristics Emerging

Without yet trying to force a final definition upon the carnal mind, Scripture has already shown us a recognizable pattern.

The fallen mind:

follows its own way rather than God's way;

leans upon its own understanding;

can be wise in its own eyes;

can call something right that leads to death;

operates from a heart capable of deceiving itself;

turns toward its own thoughts and desires;

becomes spiritually blind and without understanding;

and ultimately requires **a new heart and a new spirit**, not merely outward correction.

This makes the coming New Testament language much easier to understand.

And there is one more Old Testament passage I think forms a beautiful bridge into it:

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."
Isaiah 26:3 KJV

Compare that later with:

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

We began with a mind departing from God's word in Eden. Now we see a mind **stayed upon God** associated with peace.

The contrast is becoming quite sharp.

The next part should take us into **Christ's teaching**, because Jesus exposes the source of defilement, distinguishes what comes from within, confronts the thinking of the flesh even among His own disciples, and then tells Nicodemus plainly why man **must be born again**. That will bring everything we have established in Genesis and the prophets directly into the New Testament.

Now that the Old Testament has established the problem within the heart and thoughts, we can come to Christ's teaching and see those same truths brought into much sharper focus.

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XVII. Christ Shows That Defilement Comes From Within

The Pharisees were concerned with outward defilement. Jesus directed attention to its actual source:

"There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man."
Mark 7:15 KJV

Later He explains:

"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,"
Mark 7:21 KJV

"Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:"
Mark 7:22 KJV

"All these evil things come from within, and defile the man."
Mark 7:23 KJV

This confirms what we were already seeing in Genesis:

"...every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."
Genesis 6:5 KJV

The outward act is not the beginning of the problem. It proceeds from something **within**.

Jesus therefore deals repeatedly with the heart rather than merely outward conduct.

XVIII. The Tree and Its Fruit

Jesus gives us another principle that becomes especially important when considering the two seeds and the children of God and children of the devil:

"Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit."
Matthew 7:17 KJV

And:

"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."
Matthew 7:20 KJV

Later He says:

"Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit."
Matthew 12:33 KJV

Then Jesus immediately connects the fruit with the heart:

"...for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."
Matthew 12:34 KJV

And:

"A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things."
Matthew 12:35 KJV

This is very important.

Fruit reveals what is within.

That agrees directly with John's later statement:

"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil..."
1 John 3:10 KJV

They are **manifest**. Something inward becomes visible through what proceeds from the life.

XIX. Jesus Identifies Spiritual Parentage by What Is Done

This brings us back to John 8, but now we can examine it more closely.

Certain men claimed:

“Abraham is our father.”
John 8:39 KJV

Jesus answered:

“If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.”

Their natural descent was not the point Jesus was making.

He looked at what they **did**.

Then He said:

“Ye do the deeds of your father.”
John 8:41 KJV

Eventually He identifies that father:

“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.”
John 8:44 KJV

Notice again the relationship between **source and manifestation**:

father → lusts → works.

This is precisely what we need to remember when studying the seed of the serpent. Scripture itself shows us what that relationship means by the nature and works being manifested.

XX. Christ Exposes the Thinking of the Flesh

There is another passage that is especially revealing because it involves Peter.

Jesus tells His disciples that He must suffer, be killed, and rise again.

Peter objects:

“Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.”
Matthew 16:22 KJV

From a merely human standpoint, Peter's response could appear reasonable, perhaps even loving. He does not want Jesus to suffer and die.

But Jesus answers:

“Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me...”
Matthew 16:23 KJV

Then Jesus explains **why**:

“...for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”

That is an extraordinary statement for our study.

Here are the two things contrasted:

“the things that be of God”

and

“those that be of men.”

Peter was evaluating what Jesus had said from the human viewpoint rather than God's purpose.

The thought could appear good to human reasoning while actually opposing God's will.

We saw exactly that principle in Proverbs:

“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man...”
Proverbs 14:12 KJV

This shows us something important about carnality: **it does not always present itself as obvious wickedness.**

Human reasoning can oppose God while appearing sensible, compassionate, practical, or even protective.

The determining question remains: **Is it according to God?**

XXI. Self Is at the Center of the Conflict

Notice what Jesus says immediately after correcting Peter:

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”
Matthew 16:24 KJV

That follows directly after:

“...thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”

Then:

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.”
Matthew 16:25 KJV

Here we encounter something that will become very important when Paul describes the flesh.

The carnal way seeks to preserve **self**.

Christ requires **self-denial**.

Not because human existence itself is evil, but because **self cannot occupy the place of government that belongs to God.**

Christ Himself shows the opposite spirit:

“...nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”
Luke 22:42 KJV

There is the contrast in very simple language:

my will

and

thy will.

Christ submits perfectly to the Father.

XXII. Why Rebirth Is Necessary

Now we are prepared for John 3.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and *“a ruler of the Jews.”* He recognized that Jesus was a teacher come from God.

But Jesus immediately tells him:

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”
John 3:3 KJV

Nicodemus naturally thinks about physical birth.

Jesus explains:

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”
John 3:6 KJV

Then:

“Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”
John 3:7 KJV

This brings together much of what we have been tracing.

God does not merely tell the fallen man to educate the flesh until it becomes Spirit.

Jesus makes a distinction:

born of flesh → flesh

born of Spirit → spirit

Therefore:

“Ye must be born again.”

Now Ezekiel's prophecy becomes particularly meaningful:

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you...”
Ezekiel 36:26 KJV

And:

“And I will put my spirit within you...”
Ezekiel 36:27 KJV

The answer to the inward problem is an inward work of God.

XXIII. Born of God

John explains this even before recording Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus:

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God...”
John 1:12 KJV

Then:

“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”
John 1:13 KJV

That is particularly important alongside our discussion of the **children of God**.

They are **born of God**.

John develops this much further in his first epistle:

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him...”
1 John 3:9 KJV

And the next verse:

“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil...”
1 John 3:10 KJV

Here again we find:

birth

seed

nature manifested

children of God

children of the devil

These are not disconnected ideas. Scripture is bringing them together.

XXIV. Flesh Gives Birth to Flesh; Spirit Gives Birth to Spirit

We can now begin seeing why calling the carnal condition simply “human nature” would obscure the biblical picture.

Man **as created** was made in God's image.

Sin and death **entered** through the fall.

Jesus now says:

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

The solution is **new birth**.

And the person born of God begins manifesting something different because there is now a different source of life within.

This prepares us directly for Paul's language:

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature...”
2 Corinthians 5:17 KJV

And:

"...the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."
Ephesians 4:24 KJV

Notice that phrase again:

"after God."

We started in Genesis:

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."

Now the new man is:

"after God...created in righteousness and true holiness."

There is something very beautiful coming into view.

XXV. Now We Are Ready for Paul

We have finally reached the point where terms such as **natural man**, **old man**, **flesh**, **carnal**, **new man**, and **spiritual** can be examined without confusing them with man as God originally created him.

And Paul is going to make distinctions that are extremely important.

He will show us:

the natural man and the spiritual man;

the old man and the new man;

the flesh and the Spirit;

the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit;

the carnal mind and the spiritual mind;

and ultimately,

the mind of Christ.

But before going directly to Romans 8, I think **1 Corinthians 2–3 should come first**, because Paul moves almost seamlessly from **the natural man** to **the spiritual man**, and then immediately confronts people who should have been spiritual but whom he must address as **carnal**.

That passage may give us an important distinction between **the natural man** and what Paul means when he calls someone **carnal**. We should let him establish that distinction carefully before we define either term too broadly.

Now we can let Paul make these distinctions carefully. This section is especially important because **natural**, **carnal**, and **spiritual** are related terms, but we should not assume that Scripture uses them interchangeably.

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XXVI. The Natural Man and the Things of the Spirit

Paul begins by contrasting human wisdom with what God reveals by His Spirit:

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."
1 Corinthians 2:9 KJV

Then:

"But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."
1 Corinthians 2:10 KJV

Here again is the limitation of what originates merely with man.

These things are not discovered simply by the natural senses or human reasoning.

They are **revealed by the Spirit**.

Paul continues:

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God..."
1 Corinthians 2:12 KJV

That connects directly with our previous study concerning **the spirit of the world**.

There are again two opposing sources:

the spirit of the world

and

the Spirit which is of God.

XXVII. The Natural Man Cannot Receive the Things of the Spirit

Then comes the important statement:

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him..."
1 Corinthians 2:14 KJV

Why?

"...neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

This is stronger than saying that the natural man simply **does not understand yet**.

Paul says:

"neither can he know them."

And he tells us why:

"they are spiritually discerned."

This takes us directly back to Christ:

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."
John 3:6 KJV

Spiritual things require spiritual discernment.

The natural man is trying to apprehend the things of God without the Spirit by whom those things are revealed.

Therefore they appear **foolish** to him.

XXVIII. The Spiritual Man

Paul immediately gives the contrast:

"But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man."
1 Corinthians 2:15 KJV

Then comes this remarkable conclusion:

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."
1 Corinthians 2:16 KJV

Now our study has reached **the mind of Christ**.

Look how far this reaches back.

Man was created:

in the image and likeness of God.

Through the fall came:

sin and death.

We have seen:

man's own way, man's own understanding, man's own thoughts.

Now through the Spirit Paul says:

“we have the mind of Christ.”

That is the opposite direction from carnality.

XXIX. But Then Paul Says Something Surprising

Immediately after saying *“we have the mind of Christ,”* Paul writes:

“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal...”
1 Corinthians 3:1 KJV

This is very important.

He calls them:

“brethren.”

Yet he says:

“I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual.”

Instead:

“but as unto carnal.”

So we need to be careful here.

The **natural man** of 1 Corinthians 2:14 and the **carnal brethren** of 1 Corinthians 3:1 are not simply described in exactly the same terms.

Paul has changed his language.

XXX. Carnality Can Be Present Where Spiritual Growth Should Be

Paul continues:

"I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it..."
1 Corinthians 3:2 KJV

That would be understandable at the beginning.

A newborn must mature.

But Paul adds:

"...neither yet now are ye able."

That is the problem.

They should have progressed.

Then he tells them why:

"For ye are yet carnal..."
1 Corinthians 3:3 KJV

Notice the word:

"yet."

Something that should not continue is continuing.

And Paul does not leave us wondering what evidence he sees.

"...for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal..."

There are the manifestations:

envying

strife

divisions

Then Paul adds:

"...and walk as men?"

That phrase is especially revealing.

They are supposed to be governed by the Spirit, yet their conduct looks like ordinary fallen human conduct.

They are **walking as men**.

XXXI. Carnality Revealed Through Attachment to Men

Paul gives a specific example:

"For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?"
1 Corinthians 3:4 KJV

Their carnality is being revealed in **party spirit**.

One identifies himself with Paul.

Another with Apollos.

Paul immediately strips away the importance they have attached to the men:

"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed..."
1 Corinthians 3:5 KJV

Then:

"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."
1 Corinthians 3:6 KJV

And therefore:

"So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."
1 Corinthians 3:7 KJV

That is significant.

The carnal mind elevates the human instrument.

The spiritual understanding sees **God as the source**.

XXXII. This Connects Directly With Division Among God's People

Paul had already addressed this earlier:

"Now I beseech you, brethren... that there be no divisions among you..."
1 Corinthians 1:10 KJV

Some were saying:

"I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ."
1 Corinthians 1:12 KJV

Paul's response is:

“Is Christ divided?”
1 Corinthians 1:13 KJV

That question reaches far beyond Corinth.

“Is Christ divided?”

The divisions were not evidence of superior spirituality.

Paul identifies them as evidence of **carnality**.

That fits perfectly with what we have previously seen concerning the **one body**.

XXXIII. The Wisdom of This World

Paul also connects carnality with another subject we have already encountered: **human wisdom apart from God**.

He writes:

“For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.”
1 Corinthians 3:19 KJV

This brings us all the way back to Eden again:

“...a tree to be desired to make one wise...”
Genesis 3:6 KJV

And back to Proverbs:

“Be not wise in thine own eyes...”
Proverbs 3:7 KJV

Human wisdom is not condemned merely because humans possess intelligence. God created man's capacity to think.

The problem is **wisdom operating independently of and contrary to God**.

That is why Paul had already written:

“That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”
1 Corinthians 2:5 KJV

XXXIV. We Can Now Make an Important Distinction

At this point Scripture allows us to say something more carefully than we could at the beginning.

The **natural man**:

“receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.”

The **spiritual man** possesses spiritual discernment through the Spirit.

But Paul can also address **brethren** as **carnal** when their lives are manifesting things belonging to the flesh rather than the Spirit.

Therefore, **carnality is not merely another word for being physically human.**

Nor should we automatically make **natural man** and **carnal** identical in every passage.

We must allow the immediate context to tell us how each word is being used.

That is important because Romans 8 is going to take us even deeper into the distinction between **flesh and Spirit**.

XXXV. What Does Carnality Look Like So Far?

Now we can gather what Scripture itself has shown us without yet completing our definition.

Carnality manifests itself in:

man's own way rather than God's way;

man's own understanding as his governing standard;

wisdom in his own eyes;

desires contrary to God's word;

self-will;

evil thoughts proceeding from within;

envying;

strife;

division;

party spirit and attachment to men;

walking “as men”;

and **the wisdom of this world rather than the wisdom revealed by God.**

This is already showing us why carnality can sometimes be deceptive.

It is not limited to what people ordinarily call gross sin.

A person can be discussing **teachers, doctrine, congregations, knowledge, and even the things of God**, while envy, rivalry, human allegiance, pride, strife, and division reveal that the manner in which he is handling those things is **carnal**.

The subject matter can be spiritual while **the mind operating upon it is carnal**.

That is precisely what was happening at Corinth.

And now we are ready for **Romans 7 and Romans 8**.

I think we should take them together rather than jumping immediately to Romans 8:7, because Romans 7 introduces **the law of sin**, the conflict involving the flesh, and man's inability; then Romans 8 opens with what God accomplished **through Christ and the Spirit**.

That context should finally allow us to examine Paul's statement *"the carnal mind is enmity against God"* without separating it from the answer God has provided in Christ.

Romans 7 and 8 bring us into the heart of the matter. We have already established where the carnal condition came from; now Paul shows us both its bondage and God's answer to it.

The Carnal Mind

XXXVI. The Law Is Not the Problem

As Paul begins examining sin in Romans 7, he makes something very clear:

"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid."
Romans 7:7 KJV

Later:

"Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."
Romans 7:12 KJV

This matters because when we eventually reach Romans 8:7 and read that the carnal mind *"is not subject to the law of God,"* the problem is plainly **not with God's law**.

God's commandment is holy.

The problem is **sin**.

Paul says:

“But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence.”
Romans 7:8 KJV

The commandment exposes something already wrong within.

XXXVII. The Commandment Reveals Sin

Paul explains:

“For without the law sin was dead.”
Romans 7:8 KJV

Then:

“For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.”
Romans 7:9 KJV

And:

“For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.”
Romans 7:11 KJV

Notice those words:

deceived

and

slew me.

They take us back again to the beginning.

The serpent **deceived**.

Sin entered.

Death entered.

And Paul says here that sin deceived and slew.

The pattern is remarkably consistent.

XXXVIII. Something Is Dwelling Within

Paul now begins describing the inward conflict:

“For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.”
Romans 7:14 KJV

There is our word again:

carnal.

Then:

“For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.”
Romans 7:15 KJV

Paul identifies the problem:

“Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.”
Romans 7:17 KJV

And then he makes a distinction that is very important for everything we established at the beginning:

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing...”
Romans 7:18 KJV

Notice Paul's qualification:

“that is, in my flesh.”

He does not say that God's original creation of humanity was evil.

He identifies **the flesh** as the location of the problem he is describing.

XXXIX. The Desire to Do Right Is Not Enough

Paul continues:

“...for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.”
Romans 7:18 KJV

This tells us something very important about the carnal condition.

A person may recognize what is right.

A person may even **want** to do what is right.

But wanting righteousness does not itself provide power over sin.

Paul says:

"For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."
Romans 7:19 KJV

Then again:

"Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."
Romans 7:20 KJV

The problem is deeper than insufficient information.

This man needs **deliverance**.

XL. Two Laws Are Operating

Paul says:

"I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me."
Romans 7:21 KJV

Then something very interesting:

"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:"
Romans 7:22 KJV

But:

"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind..."
Romans 7:23 KJV

And what does that other law do?

"...bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

Here we have:

the law of God

the law of the mind

and

the law of sin

with sin bringing the man into **captivity**.

This is not freedom.

It is bondage.

XLI. The Cry Is for Deliverance

Paul finally cries:

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"
Romans 7:24 KJV

Notice the question.

He does not ask:

What new rule do I need?

He does not ask:

What additional information do I need?

He asks:

"WHO shall deliver me?"

And immediately:

"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."
Romans 7:25 KJV

The answer is **Christ**.

That takes us straight into Romans 8.

XLII. What the Law Could Not Do, God Did

Romans 8 begins:

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus..."
Romans 8:1 KJV

Then:

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."
Romans 8:2 KJV

Look at the contrast with Romans 7.

Romans 7:

captivity to the law of sin

Romans 8:

made free from the law of sin and death

And how?

“the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.”

Here again are the two things we have been following:

sin and death

versus

Spirit and life.

XLIII. God Condemned Sin in the Flesh

Paul continues:

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son...”
Romans 8:3 KJV

Again, the failure was not God's law.

Romans 7 already told us:

“the law is holy.”

The weakness was:

“through the flesh.”

Then Paul says:

“...God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:”

Why?

“That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”
Romans 8:4 KJV

Now we arrive at the great division:

after the flesh

or

after the Spirit.

XLIV. What Does the Mind Attend To?

Paul says:

“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh...”
Romans 8:5 KJV

And:

“...but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.”

The word **mind** here is important.

This is not merely about isolated thoughts passing through someone's head.

It concerns what the mind is **set upon**, what it regards, what governs its thinking and direction.

There are two orientations:

After the flesh → things of the flesh

After the Spirit → things of the Spirit

Now we reach the verse from which our entire study gets its name.

XLV. The Carnal Mind Is Death

“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”
Romans 8:6 KJV

At this point, that statement means much more than it would have if we had begun our study here.

We have traced **death** all the way from Eden.

God said:

“...thou shalt surely die.”

Then:

“...by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin...”

Romans 7 speaks of:

“the body of this death.”

Romans 8 speaks of:

“the law of sin and death.”

And now:

“to be carnally minded is death.”

This is not an isolated expression.

It belongs to the entire scriptural account we have been following.

XLVI. Why Is the Carnal Mind Death?

Paul tells us immediately:

“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God...”
Romans 8:7 KJV

This may be one of the clearest descriptions of the carnal mind anywhere in Scripture.

It is:

enmity against God.

Not merely immature.

Not merely uninformed.

Not merely mistaken.

Enmity.

That takes us back again to Genesis 3:15:

“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed...”

We should not force those passages together beyond what they actually say, but we certainly cannot miss the repeated scriptural reality of **opposition** between that which is of God and that which is contrary to Him.

Paul then explains the enmity:

“...for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”
Romans 8:7 KJV

Here we arrive at something central to our definition.

The carnal mind is characterized by **non-subjection to God**.

And that takes us directly back to Eden.

God spoke.

Another word was received.

Man disobeyed.

The fundamental issue was **subjection to God**.

XLVII. The Flesh Cannot Please God

Paul concludes:

"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."
Romans 8:8 KJV

Again, that is absolute language:

"cannot please God."

This parallels what we saw concerning the natural man:

"...neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."
1 Corinthians 2:14 KJV

Something beyond improvement of the flesh is necessary.

And Paul immediately tells these saints:

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you."
Romans 8:9 KJV

There is the answer:

the Spirit of God dwelling within.

That takes us directly back to Ezekiel:

"And I will put my spirit within you..."
Ezekiel 36:27 KJV

And to Christ:

"That which is born of the Spirit is spirit."
John 3:6 KJV

The thread is remarkably consistent.

XLVIII. The Same Spirit That Raised Christ Gives Life

Paul continues:

"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you..."
Romans 8:11 KJV

Then:

"...he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

Again:

death versus life.

The carnal mind is **death**.

The Spirit **quickens**, or gives life.

The answer to the condition introduced through sin is not the flesh repairing itself.

It is **life through the Spirit of God**.

XLIX. We Are Not Debtors to the Flesh

Paul then says:

"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh."
Romans 8:12 KJV

The flesh has no rightful claim upon the saint.

Then:

"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die..."
Romans 8:13 KJV

Again:

flesh → death.

But:

"...if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

Notice carefully who does this:

“ye through the Spirit.”

Not human determination independently of God.

Not flesh conquering flesh.

Through the Spirit.

L. The Children of God Appear Again

And now Paul brings us directly back to something we established at the beginning:

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”
Romans 8:14 KJV

That is significant.

We began with:

the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent

and later:

the children of God and the children of the devil.

Now Paul identifies the sons of God by something:

they are led by the Spirit of God.

John said:

“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil...”
1 John 3:10 KJV

Jesus said:

“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.”
John 8:44 KJV

Again we see **nature manifested through the life**.

LI. We Can Now Give a Much Clearer Scriptural Description

We have finally reached the place where I think we can describe the carnal mind without getting ahead of Scripture.

The **carnal mind** is the mind governed by the flesh, the fallen condition that came through sin rather than the nature in which God originally created man.

It **minds the things of the flesh**.

It is **death**.

It is **enmity against God**.

It is **not subject to God's law**.

And, remaining carnal, it **cannot be subject to God**.

Therefore those who are in the flesh **cannot please God**.

That condition manifests itself in everything we have already seen: self-will, man's own way, man's wisdom apart from God, envy, strife, division, lust, pride, and resistance to God's will.

But this is equally important:

Scripture does not leave man there.

The answer is not merely restraint of the carnal mind.

It is not merely educating it.

It is not merely making it more respectable.

Christ said:

"Ye must be born again."

Paul says:

"the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

And the saints are:

born of the Spirit, indwelt by the Spirit, led by the Spirit, and enabled through the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the body.

Now I think we are ready for **Galatians 5**, because Paul is going to make this visible in everyday life. Romans has shown us **what the carnal mind is**; Galatians will show us **what the flesh produces**, set directly against **the fruit of the Spirit**. That should connect especially well with the study we just completed on *The Fruit of the Spirit: Christ Manifested in You*.

Galatians 5 brings the matter out where it can be plainly seen. Romans showed us the **carnal mind as enmity against God**; Galatians shows what comes forth when the flesh is allowed to operate, and then places it directly opposite the Spirit.

The Carnal Mind

LII. Liberty Is Not Liberty to the Flesh

Paul begins this portion with an important warning:

"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another."
Galatians 5:13 KJV

The saints have been made free, but freedom in Christ is not freedom **for the flesh**.

Notice also what Paul immediately places opposite it:

"...but by love serve one another."

The flesh tends toward self. The Spirit produces love that serves another.

Paul then says:

"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."
Galatians 5:14 KJV

But look at what happens when carnality operates among people:

"But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."
Galatians 5:15 KJV

That takes us immediately back to Corinth:

envying, strife, divisions.

Carnality destroys fellowship.

LIII. Walk in the Spirit

Then Paul gives the answer:

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."
Galatians 5:16 KJV

Notice that Paul does not say merely:

Try harder not to fulfill the flesh.

He says:

"Walk in the Spirit."

The victory is connected with the Spirit.

This agrees perfectly with Romans 8:

"...if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."
Romans 8:13 KJV

Again:

through the Spirit.

LIV. Flesh and Spirit Are Contrary

Paul explains:

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh..."
Galatians 5:17 KJV

Then:

"...and these are contrary the one to the other..."

There is no harmony between them.

They are **contrary**.

That agrees with everything we have traced from the beginning: the enmity, the two seeds, the two ways, the things of men versus the things of God, the natural versus the spiritual, and finally the carnal mind which is *"enmity against God."*

But notice that Paul is speaking to **brethren**.

That is important.

The saints must still **walk in the Spirit** rather than give occasion to the flesh.

This agrees with what we saw in Corinth. Paul could call them brethren while rebuking them because they were **"yet carnal."**

LV. The Works Reveal Their Source

Paul now says:

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest..."
Galatians 5:19 KJV

That word **manifest** is significant.

We have encountered this principle before:

"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."
Matthew 7:20 KJV

And:

"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil..."
1 John 3:10 KJV

What is inward eventually becomes **manifest**.

The flesh produces **works**.

The Spirit produces **fruit**.

LVI. The Works of the Flesh

Paul gives the list:

"Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,"
Galatians 5:19 KJV

"Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,"
Galatians 5:20 KJV

"Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like..."
Galatians 5:21 KJV

Notice how broad this is.

Some works are obviously sensual:

adultery
fornication
uncleanness
lasciviousness
drunkenness
revellings

But look at how much of the list concerns **how people relate to one another**:

hatred
variance
emulations

wrath
strife
seditions
heresies
envyings
murders

This is important because people can recognize adultery or drunkenness as fleshly while overlooking **envy, rivalry, contention, anger, factions and division**.

Paul does not overlook them.

They are all:

"works of the flesh."

LVII. This Explains Corinth

Now Paul's words to the Corinthians become even clearer:

"For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions..."
1 Corinthians 3:3 KJV

Compare Galatians:

"...hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings..."

Paul is recognizing the same source.

Their division over Paul and Apollos was not a harmless difference in preference.

The **fruit was revealing the operation of the flesh**.

That gives us an important means of discernment.

We do not determine whether something is spiritual merely because it occurs among people talking about God.

We look at **what it produces**.

Jesus said:

"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

LVIII. "And Such Like"

There is also something important at the end of Paul's list:

“...and such like...”
Galatians 5:21 KJV

That means Paul is not giving an exhaustive catalogue.

He gives recognizable manifestations of the flesh and then includes other things **of the same kind**.

Therefore we cannot reason:

“This particular behavior isn't named in Galatians 5, so it cannot be fleshly.”

The question becomes:

What is its nature? What is its source? What does it produce?

That will become especially useful when applying these Scriptures to things that did not exist in exactly the same outward form in biblical times.

LIX. The Fruit of the Spirit

Then comes the contrast:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,”
Galatians 5:22 KJV

“Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”
Galatians 5:23 KJV

This connects directly with our previous study.

The flesh has its **works**.

The Spirit has His **fruit**.

And as we saw there, the fruit of the Spirit is ultimately **Christ manifested in the life**.

That makes the contrast especially beautiful.

The carnal condition manifests what is contrary to God.

The Spirit produces in us that which reflects **Christ**.

LX. The Flesh Is Not Supposed to Govern the Saint

Now Paul makes a very strong statement:

“And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”
Galatians 5:24 KJV

Notice:

“they that are Christ's.”

This is belonging.

And what characterizes those belonging to Christ?

They:

“have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”

That connects directly with Christ's words:

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”
Matthew 16:24 KJV

And with Paul elsewhere:

“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him...”
Romans 6:6 KJV

This is going to require closer examination because Scripture introduces another important term:

the old man.

We should not casually assume that **flesh**, **old man**, and **carnal mind** mean precisely the same thing in every passage. But clearly they belong to the same field of truth, and Scripture will show us their relationship.

LXI. Living in the Spirit Must Become Walking in the Spirit

Paul then says:

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”
Galatians 5:25 KJV

That is wonderfully concise.

Live in the Spirit.

Walk in the Spirit.

The inward life is to become the outward walk.

And immediately Paul gives another warning:

“Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.”
Galatians 5:26 KJV

That placement is revealing.

Right after discussing the fruit of the Spirit, Paul warns against:

vain glory

provoking

envying

These are manifestations of self.

Carnality therefore is not merely about bodily appetite. **Pride, competition, recognition, rivalry and envy belong to the flesh as surely as sensual sins do.**

LXII. The Contrast Is Becoming Very Clear

We can now put Romans and Galatians together.

Romans tells us:

Carnal mind → death

Spiritual mind → life and peace

Carnal mind → enmity against God

Flesh → cannot please God

Spirit → life

Galatians shows us what those two sources produce:

Flesh → works of the flesh

Spirit → fruit of the Spirit

So the distinction is not merely theoretical.

It becomes **visible in the life**.

And this gives us a very useful scriptural principle:

The nature of the tree is known by what it produces.

Jesus said:

“For every tree is known by his own fruit.”
Luke 6:44 KJV

LXIII. But Now We Need to Examine the “Old Man”

There is something we should settle before moving much farther.

We have now encountered several expressions:

natural man

carnal

flesh

old man

new man

spiritual

If we casually collapse all of those into one definition, we could lose distinctions Scripture deliberately makes.

Romans 6 says:

“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him...”
Romans 6:6 KJV

Ephesians says:

“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;”
Ephesians 4:22 KJV

And then:

“And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;”
Ephesians 4:23 KJV

Followed by:

“And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”
Ephesians 4:24 KJV

That passage brings **the old man, the mind, renewal, and the new man** together in three consecutive verses.

And the phrase **"after God"** takes us straight back to where our study began: man created in the image and likeness of God.

So I think our next section should be **The Old Man, the New Man, and the Renewing of the Mind**. That will help answer an important question arising naturally from everything we've seen: **If the old man is crucified and the saints are born of the Spirit, why does Scripture still warn saints against carnality and tell them to renew their minds?**

This is an important place to slow down slightly, because Scripture speaks very strongly about what happens to the **old man**, while at the same time instructing saints concerning the **renewing of the mind**. We should allow both truths to stand exactly as written.

The Carnal Mind

LXIV. The Old Man Is Crucified With Christ

Paul speaks very plainly in Romans 6:

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed..."
Romans 6:6 KJV

Notice that Paul does not say that the old man needs to be improved.

He says:

"our old man is crucified with him."

And there is a purpose:

"...that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

This connects directly with what we saw in Romans 7 and 8.

The fallen condition is characterized by **bondage to sin**.

But here:

"henceforth we should not serve sin."

Then Paul says:

“For he that is dead is freed from sin.”
Romans 6:7 KJV

The gospel is not merely teaching the servant of sin better behavior while leaving him in bondage.

There is **deliverance from the old mastery**.

LXV. Dead With Christ, Alive Unto God

Paul continues:

“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:”
Romans 6:8 KJV

And then applies this personally:

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
Romans 6:11 KJV

Here again are the two great realities we have followed throughout this study:

death

and

life.

But something has changed.

Before, sin brought death.

Now through Christ the saint is to reckon himself:

dead unto sin

but

alive unto God.

LXVI. Sin Is No Longer to Reign

Then Paul says:

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.”
Romans 6:12 KJV

That word **reign** is important.

Romans 5 had said:

"...death reigned by one..."
Romans 5:17 KJV

But now the saint is commanded:

"Let not sin therefore reign."

And:

"Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin..."
Romans 6:13 KJV

Instead:

"...yield yourselves unto God..."

Here again is the issue of **subjection**.

Romans 8 says the carnal mind *"is not subject to the law of God."*

Romans 6 tells the saint:

yield yourself unto God.

These are opposite positions.

LXVII. The Old Man and His Deeds

Colossians gives us another description:

"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;"
Colossians 3:9 KJV

Notice the relationship:

old man → his deeds.

Then:

"And have put on the new man..."
Colossians 3:10 KJV

And how is this new man described?

"...which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:"

There is our beginning again.

“after the image of him that created him.”

We began this entire study with:

“So God created man in his own image...”
Genesis 1:27 KJV

The connection should not be overlooked.

The carnal condition came **after creation through the fall**.

The new man is described in relation to **the image of the Creator**.

LXVIII. Ephesians Makes This Even Clearer

Paul writes:

“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;”
Ephesians 4:22 KJV

Here the old man is described as:

“corrupt.”

And the corruption operates:

“according to the deceitful lusts.”

Again we find **deception** associated with sin.

The serpent deceived Eve.

Sin deceived Paul in Romans 7.

And here the old man is corrupt according to **deceitful lusts**.

Then comes the verse especially important to our present subject:

“And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;”
Ephesians 4:23 KJV

Then:

“And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”
Ephesians 4:24 KJV

Look at the progression:

put off the old man

be renewed in the spirit of your mind

put on the new man

And the new man is:

“after God”

and:

“created in righteousness and true holiness.”

LXIX. The New Man Is Not the Carnal Man Improved

This distinction is becoming very important.

Scripture does not describe salvation as:

old man → gradually repaired old man.

It speaks of:

old man

and

new man.

Paul says elsewhere:

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature...”
2 Corinthians 5:17 KJV

Then:

“...old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

This agrees with Christ's words:

“Ye must be born again.”

The biblical language is radical:

birth

death

crucifixion

new creature

old man

new man

This is far more than behavior modification.

LXX. Then Why Must the Mind Be Renewed?

This is where an important distinction begins appearing.

The saint has been born of God.

The old man is crucified.

Yet Paul still tells saints:

"...be renewed in the spirit of your mind."

And in Romans:

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..."
Romans 12:2 KJV

Therefore, **new birth and renewal of the mind cannot simply be identical expressions for exactly the same thing.**

There is a new life.

But the mind must be **renewed according to that life**.

This helps us understand how Paul could say to the Corinthians:

"...brethren..."

and yet:

"...ye are yet carnal."

They had received something from God, but in particular areas they were still **thinking and behaving according to the flesh rather than according to the Spirit**.

LXXI. "Be Not Conformed to This World"

Romans 12 deserves careful attention:

“And be not conformed to this world...”
Romans 12:2 KJV

The world exerts pressure toward a particular pattern.

Paul says:

do not be conformed to it.

Instead:

“...but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind...”

Notice:

conformed versus **transformed**.

One takes its pattern from **the world**.

The other comes through **renewal of the mind**.

And what does this renewal enable?

“...that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

This is especially significant.

The renewed mind increasingly recognizes and proves **the will of God**.

That is the opposite of the carnal mind insisting upon **its own way**.

LXXII. The Carnal Pattern Must Not Be Allowed to Continue

This helps us answer our earlier question.

If someone has been born of the Spirit, why all the warnings concerning the flesh?

Because Scripture does not teach the saint to return to living according to the source from which he has been delivered.

Paul says:

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”
Galatians 5:25 KJV

Life and walk are related, but Paul still gives the command.

Likewise:

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above...”
Colossians 3:1 KJV

And:

“Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”
Colossians 3:2 KJV

There is still something the saint must **set**.

Where will the mind be directed?

LXXIII. Mortify What Belongs to the Earthly Condition

Colossians continues:

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth...”
Colossians 3:5 KJV

Paul names:

“...fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness...”

Then:

“But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.”
Colossians 3:8 KJV

Again, notice the breadth.

Not merely sensual sin.

anger

wrath

malice

evil speech

These belong to what must be put off.

Then comes:

“...put off the old man with his deeds;”

and:

"...put on the new man..."

LXXIV. What Does the New Man Look Like?

Paul does not leave the new man undefined.

He continues:

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;"
Colossians 3:12 KJV

Then:

"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another..."
Colossians 3:13 KJV

And:

"And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."
Colossians 3:14 KJV

Look at the contrast.

The flesh:

hatred
variance
wrath
strife
envy

The new man:

mercy
kindness
humbleness
meekness
longsuffering
forgiveness
charity

We are seeing again what we studied as **the fruit of the Spirit**.

LXXV. "Let the Word of Christ Dwell in You Richly"

Then Paul says something especially relevant to the renewing of the mind:

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom..."
Colossians 3:16 KJV

This brings our study of **the Word and the Spirit together** directly into the subject of the carnal mind.

The mind is not renewed by simply trying to stop thinking carnal thoughts.

It is brought under the truth of God.

Jesus prayed:

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."
John 17:17 KJV

And the Spirit:

"...will guide you into all truth..."
John 16:13 KJV

So again:

Word and Spirit together.

The same Spirit who gives life leads into the truth of the Word.

LXXVI. Bringing the Mind Into Obedience

Paul uses even stronger language in 2 Corinthians:

"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God..."
2 Corinthians 10:5 KJV

That sounds remarkably familiar after everything we have studied.

The carnal mind is:

"enmity against God."

Here are thoughts and imaginations that:

"exalteth itself against the knowledge of God."

What happens to them?

"...bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;"

There is our central issue again:

obedience.

Eden involved departure from obedience.

The carnal mind is **not subject to God**.

The renewed mind brings its thoughts into:

"the obedience of Christ."

LXXVII. The Mind of Christ

Now we can return to something Paul said earlier:

"But we have the mind of Christ."
1 Corinthians 2:16 KJV

And Philippians tells us what that mind looks like:

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:"
Philippians 2:5 KJV

The surrounding passage describes:

lowliness of mind

esteeming others

not looking merely upon one's own things

taking the form of a servant

humbling oneself

and finally:

"...became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."
Philippians 2:8 KJV

There is perhaps no sharper contrast with the carnal mind.

The carnal mind is:

not subject to God.

Christ:

“became obedient unto death.”

The carnal way exalts self.

Christ:

“...made himself of no reputation...”

The flesh produces rivalry and vain glory.

Paul says:

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind...”
Philippians 2:3 KJV

Then:

“Let this mind be in you.”

LXXVIII. We Have Come Full Circle

Now something beautiful becomes visible across the whole Scripture.

At creation:
Man is created **in the image and likeness of God**.

At the fall:
Man departs from God's word through disobedience; sin and death enter.

In the carnal condition:
The mind becomes **enmity against God** and **not subject to God**.

In Christ:
The old man is crucified.

Through new birth:
That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

In the new man:
He is *“after God...created in righteousness and true holiness.”*

Through renewal:
The mind is transformed.

And the pattern placed before us is:
the mind of Christ.

This is why I think we can now see that **renewing the mind is not turning the carnal nature into the nature of Christ**. Scripture speaks instead of the old man being crucified and the new man being put on. The mind is then renewed according to the new life received from God.

That distinction will matter greatly when we move into practical discernment.

Because now the question becomes: **How does carnality attempt to operate in everyday thought and conduct, even among saints?**

We have already seen some of it: self-will, defensiveness, pride, envy, comparison, strife, human allegiance, fear, lust, anger, seeking recognition, and relying upon human reasoning instead of God. But Scripture gives us enough detail that we can examine these **one by one**, alongside the spiritual counterpart, and learn how to recognize the difference by its fruit.

Now we can move from establishing **what the carnal mind is and where it came from** to seeing how Scripture exposes it in actual thought, motive, response, and conduct. This is important because carnality is not always as obvious as outward immorality.

The Carnal Mind

LXXIX. Recognizing the Carnal Mind

We have established from Romans:

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

And:

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."
Romans 8:7 KJV

That gives us the governing characteristic:

The carnal mind is not subject to God.

Its individual manifestations grow out of that condition.

Therefore, rather than simply making our own list of what appears “carnal,” we should continue allowing Scripture to identify those manifestations.

LXXX. Self-Will: “Mine Own Way”

We have already seen:

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way...”
Isaiah 53:6 KJV

Self-will is fundamental because the question underneath it is:

Who governs?

Jesus gives us the opposite:

“...nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”
Luke 22:42 KJV

The carnal direction is:

my way, my will.

The mind of Christ is:

Thy will be done.

That does not mean having personal desires is itself carnal. Jesus expressed His desire in Gethsemane.

The determining matter was **submission**.

“...nevertheless not my will, but thine...”

So carnality is exposed when our desire becomes more authoritative to us than God's will.

LXXXI. Pride and Self-Exaltation

Pride belongs plainly to what proceeds from the fallen heart.

Jesus includes:

“...pride, foolishness:”
Mark 7:22 KJV

John speaks of:

"...the pride of life..."
1 John 2:16 KJV

And says it:

"...is not of the Father, but is of the world."

Pride raises self.

The mind of Christ moves in the opposite direction:

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind..."
Philippians 2:3 KJV

Then:

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:"
Philippians 2:5 KJV

And Christ:

"...humbled himself, and became obedient unto death..."
Philippians 2:8 KJV

So we have another contrast:

Carnal mind → self-exaltation

Mind of Christ → humility and obedience

LXXXII. Vainglory: The Desire to Be Seen

Galatians says:

"Let us not be desirous of vain glory..."
Galatians 5:26 KJV

Vainglory is glory directed toward **self**.

Jesus repeatedly confronted this desire to be seen by men:

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them..."
Matthew 6:1 KJV

And concerning prayer:

"...for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men."
Matthew 6:5 KJV

Notice something subtle.

Giving can be good.

Prayer is good.

Yet a good outward action can be performed from a wrong inward motive.

That is extremely important to our study.

The outward act alone does not always reveal whether the mind behind it is spiritual or carnal.

God looks upon the heart.

LXXXIII. Comparison and Competition

The carnal mind also measures itself against others.

Paul says:

"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves..."
2 Corinthians 10:12 KJV

Then:

"...but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."

Comparison can easily produce either:

pride, because I believe myself superior,

or

envy, because I believe someone else has what I should have.

Both turn the attention toward **self in relation to others** rather than faithfulness before God.

Paul asks:

"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?"
1 Corinthians 4:7 KJV

And then:

"...why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"

That destroys the ground for self-exaltation.

Whatever came from God gives us no reason to glory in ourselves.

LXXXIV. Envy

Envy repeatedly appears as a manifestation of the flesh.

"...envyings..."
Galatians 5:21 KJV

Paul told the Corinthians:

"...whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal...?"
1 Corinthians 3:3 KJV

James gives us an especially revealing passage:

"But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth."
James 3:14 KJV

Notice where these things are:

"in your hearts."

Then James identifies their source:

"This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish."
James 3:15 KJV

That is very strong language.

Earthly.

Sensual.

Devilish.

And what does it produce?

"For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work."
James 3:16 KJV

Again:

source → fruit.

LXXXV. The Wisdom From Above

James immediately gives us the opposite:

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated..."
James 3:17 KJV

Then:

"...full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

Compare the two.

Wisdom not from above:

envying
strife
confusion
evil work

Wisdom from above:

pure
peaceable
gentle
easy to be intreated
merciful
good fruit
without partiality
without hypocrisy

This gives us a scriptural way to test what kind of wisdom is operating.

Not merely:

Does the argument sound intelligent?

But:

Where did this wisdom come from, and what kind of fruit does it produce?

LXXXVI. Strife and Contention

Scripture repeatedly associates strife with pride.

“Only by pride cometh contention...”
Proverbs 13:10 KJV

James asks:

“From whence come wars and fightings among you?”
James 4:1 KJV

Then he directs attention inward:

“...come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?”

Again, the outward conflict has an **inward source**.

This does not mean every disagreement is carnal. Scripture contains disagreements, corrections, rebukes, and earnest contention for truth.

The question is what **spirit and motive** govern it.

Paul says:

“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,”
2 Timothy 2:24 KJV

Then:

“In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves...”
2 Timothy 2:25 KJV

Truth does not require carnality in order to defend it.

LXXXVII. Anger and Wrath

Wrath appears among the works of the flesh:

“...wrath, strife...”
Galatians 5:20 KJV

James says:

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:”
James 1:19 KJV

Why?

“For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”
James 1:20 KJV

That distinction is especially useful:

“the wrath of man”

does not produce:

“the righteousness of God.”

A person may believe his anger is justified because he is defending something right.

But Scripture tells us that **man's wrath does not accomplish God's righteousness**.

Again, the claimed cause does not automatically sanctify the spirit in which something is done.

LXXXVIII. Unforgiveness and Retaliation

The carnal response to injury naturally desires repayment.

But Christ teaches:

“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you...”
Matthew 5:44 KJV

Paul says:

“Recompense to no man evil for evil.”
Romans 12:17 KJV

And:

“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves...”
Romans 12:19 KJV

Then:

“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”
Romans 12:21 KJV

That is entirely contrary to the natural impulse.

The flesh says:

They hurt me; I will return it.

The mind of Christ says:

Do not be overcome by their evil. Overcome evil with good.

LXXXIX. Partiality

James also exposes another manifestation:

“But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin...”
James 2:9 KJV

Human judgment tends to evaluate according to outward advantage, status, appearance, wealth, usefulness, or personal preference.

James describes people giving the wealthy man the better place while despising the poor.

He asks:

“Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?”
James 2:4 KJV

Again:

thoughts are involved.

The spiritual mind does not determine someone's worth according to the values by which the world measures people.

XC. Fear of Man

Another powerful influence upon human thinking is the opinion of others.

“The fear of man bringeth a snare...”
Proverbs 29:25 KJV

Jesus asks:

“How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?”
John 5:44 KJV

That is profound.

The desire for human approval can actually interfere with faithfulness to God.

Paul states the contrast plainly:

"...for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."
Galatians 1:10 KJV

Again the question becomes:

Who governs?

XCI. The Carnal Mind Can Operate Around Spiritual Things

This is one of the most important conclusions emerging from all these passages.

Carnality does not require a worldly subject.

The Corinthians were being carnal concerning **ministers**.

The Pharisees could act carnally concerning **prayer and giving**.

Peter reasoned carnally concerning **Christ's mission**.

People can have envy and strife concerning **truth**.

A person can seek human glory through something outwardly **good**.

So merely attaching God's name to something does not make the mind operating in it spiritual.

That is why Jesus says:

"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."
Matthew 7:20 KJV

XCII. The Central Question Keeps Returning

Throughout all these manifestations, one question continually appears:

Who is governing?

Self?

The flesh?

The opinions of men?

The wisdom of this world?

Or God through His Word and Spirit?

That brings us directly back to our central passage:

“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God...”
Romans 8:7 KJV

The individual manifestations differ, but the underlying principle remains **non-subjection to God**.

And the opposite remains:

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”
Romans 8:14 KJV

Not subject to God versus **led by the Spirit of God.**

That may be the simplest scriptural contrast we have found so far.

There is another major area we should examine next, because it can be more difficult to recognize than anger, envy, pride, or strife: **carnal reasoning itself**. Scripture has much to say about walking by sight, unbelief, fear, earthly wisdom, trusting human strength, and trying to accomplish God's purposes by fleshly means. A thing can even have the **right objective** and still be pursued through a carnal method. That takes us deeper into what it actually means to *“walk after the flesh”* rather than *“after the Spirit.”*

This takes us into a subtler part of the subject. Carnality is easier to recognize when it appears as envy, wrath, lust, or strife. It can be harder to recognize when it appears as **reasonable human thinking that has left God out of the matter**.

The Carnal Mind

XCIII. Carnal Reasoning: When Sight Becomes the Measure

Paul gives us a short but powerful statement:

“For we walk by faith, not by sight:”
2 Corinthians 5:7 KJV

This does not mean the saints ignore reality or refuse to use their senses. The contrast concerns **what governs the walk**.

Sight tells us what appears naturally possible.

Faith rests upon God.

We see this repeatedly throughout Scripture.

When man's judgment is limited to what he can naturally see, calculate, control, or accomplish, his reasoning can lead directly contrary to God.

XCIV. Israel at the Red Sea

Israel provides a striking example.

God had delivered them from Egypt. But when Pharaoh's army approached, they saw:

the sea before them

and

the Egyptian army behind them.

Scripture says:

"And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them..."
Exodus 14:10 KJV

Their conclusion followed what they could see:

"Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?"
Exodus 14:11 KJV

From the natural viewpoint, their reasoning made sense.

They were trapped.

But Moses said:

"Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD..."
Exodus 14:13 KJV

They were reasoning from circumstances without accounting for the God who had brought them there.

That is one way carnal reasoning operates:

It treats visible circumstances as though they are the whole reality.

XCV. The Twelve Spies

Numbers 13 gives us an even clearer example.

Twelve men saw essentially the same land.

They saw the same fruit.

They saw the same cities.

They saw the same inhabitants.

But they reached very different conclusions.

Ten said:

"We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we."
Numbers 13:31 KJV

Then:

"...we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight."
Numbers 13:33 KJV

Notice:

"in our own sight."

Their assessment was based upon comparing:

our strength

against

their strength.

But Caleb said:

"Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it."
Numbers 13:30 KJV

Why could Caleb and Joshua see the same circumstances differently?

Joshua and Caleb later say:

"If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us..."
Numbers 14:8 KJV

The ten spies calculated without God.

Joshua and Caleb interpreted the circumstances **in relation to God and His promise**.

That is a fundamental difference.

XCVI. Unbelief Is Not Merely Intellectual Uncertainty

Hebrews interprets Israel's failure:

“So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.”
Hebrews 3:19 KJV

Their unbelief produced disobedience.

Hebrews therefore warns:

“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”
Hebrews 3:12 KJV

Notice how unbelief is described:

“departing from the living God.”

Again, this is not merely a question of having insufficient information.

It concerns whether God Himself is believed and trusted.

XCVII. Abraham: Faith Against Natural Impossibility

Abraham gives us the opposite example.

God had promised him a son when natural circumstances made fulfillment impossible.

Paul says:

“Who against hope believed in hope...”
Romans 4:18 KJV

And:

“And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead...”
Romans 4:19 KJV

Abraham was not ignorant of the natural facts.

He knew his age.

He knew Sarah's condition.

Faith did not require pretending those facts were nonexistent.

Rather:

“He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;”
Romans 4:20 KJV

Why?

“And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.”
Romans 4:21 KJV

That is the difference.

Carnal reasoning asks:

What can naturally happen?

Faith asks:

What has God said, and is God able to perform it?

XCVIII. Human Strength Can Become a Substitute for God

Scripture repeatedly warns against trusting human power.

“Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm...”
Jeremiah 17:5 KJV

Notice the expression:

“maketh flesh his arm.”

Then comes the contrast:

“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.”
Jeremiah 17:7 KJV

Again:

flesh

versus

trust in God.

The problem is not that people may help one another. Scripture plainly teaches that they should.

The problem is making **human strength the source of confidence that belongs to God**.

XCIX. God's Work Cannot Be Accomplished by Fleshly Power

Zechariah gives us an especially important principle:

“Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.”
Zechariah 4:6 KJV

That principle becomes very important when considering attempts to accomplish something supposedly for God.

The objective might even be right.

But God's work is not made spiritual merely because the stated purpose is spiritual.

The **means** matter too.

Paul understood this.

He said:

“And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:”
1 Corinthians 2:4 KJV

Why?

“That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”
1 Corinthians 2:5 KJV

Paul would not use carnal means to manufacture a spiritual result.

C. Beginning in the Spirit and Trying to Finish Through the Flesh

Paul asks the Galatians:

“Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”
Galatians 3:3 KJV

That question reaches directly into our study.

They **began in the Spirit**.

But something had happened.

They were now attempting to reach perfection through **the flesh**.

This shows us that even after receiving something from God, a person can turn toward fleshly means in attempting to continue.

The answer is not:

Begin by the Spirit, then become sufficiently capable to continue independently.

The life that begins in the Spirit must continue **in the Spirit**.

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."
Galatians 5:25 KJV

CI. A Right Purpose Can Be Pursued in a Wrong Way

This is worth seeing in Scripture itself.

When Jesus was arrested, Peter drew a sword and struck the servant of the high priest.

Peter apparently intended to defend Jesus.

But Jesus said:

"Put up again thy sword into his place..."
Matthew 26:52 KJV

Then He says:

"Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"
Matthew 26:53 KJV

And then:

"But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"
Matthew 26:54 KJV

Peter's apparent objective was to protect Christ.

But his method actually worked **against what God was accomplishing**.

This is similar to what we saw earlier when Peter objected to Christ's death.

His concern could appear reasonable.

But Jesus said:

"...thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."
Matthew 16:23 KJV

A sincere motive does not by itself prove that the thinking or method is spiritual.

It must agree with **God**.

CII. The Weapons Themselves Can Be Carnal

Paul says:

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:"
2 Corinthians 10:3 KJV

Here "walk in the flesh" plainly refers to living physically in the body, which again shows why we must read the word **flesh** according to context.

Paul continues:

"(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)"
2 Corinthians 10:4 KJV

Notice:

not carnal

but

mighty through God.

Then:

"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God..."
2 Corinthians 10:5 KJV

The battle itself concerns thoughts, imaginations, and things raised against the knowledge of God.

And the objective is:

"...bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Again we arrive at **obedience**.

CIII. Earthly Wisdom and Wisdom From Above

James gives us perhaps the clearest test for reasoning.

He describes one kind of wisdom:

“This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.”
James 3:15 KJV

Then another:

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated...”
James 3:17 KJV

This is very important because **both may present themselves as wisdom**.

The question is not merely:

Is this clever?

Is this logical?

Does this work?

Can I justify it?

The question must also be:

Is this wisdom from above?

And Scripture tells us that its **fruit helps identify its source**.

CIV. The Flesh Judges According to Appearance

Jesus said:

“Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”
John 7:24 KJV

Samuel learned the same principle when God sent him to anoint a king.

Samuel saw Eliab and thought:

“Surely the LORD'S anointed is before him.”
1 Samuel 16:6 KJV

But God said:

“Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature...”
1 Samuel 16:7 KJV

Why?

"...for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."

Samuel was God's prophet, yet his first assessment was based upon what he could naturally see.

Being a servant of God did not automatically make every conclusion Samuel formed spiritual.

He needed **God's judgment**.

That is an important lesson.

CV. The Carnal Mind Wants What It Can Control

There is another pattern throughout Scripture.

Israel repeatedly preferred something **visible and controllable** to dependence upon the unseen God.

At Sinai they made the golden calf.

Later they demanded a king:

"...now make us a king to judge us like all the nations."
1 Samuel 8:5 KJV

God tells Samuel:

"...they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."
1 Samuel 8:7 KJV

That gets directly to the heart of our study.

The issue again is:

Who reigns?

They wanted something they could see and something resembling the systems around them:

"like all the nations."

But God says the deeper issue was:

"they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."

Carnality ultimately resists **the reign of God**.

CVI. This Helps Us Understand the Meaning of "Carnal Mind"

We can now sharpen our understanding even further.

The carnal mind does not necessarily say:

“I hate God.”

It can say:

“This seems more practical.”

“This makes more sense to me.”

“Everybody else does it this way.”

“I cannot see how God's way could work.”

“We need something we can control.”

“Surely God would understand why we need to do this differently.”

None of those statements appears in Scripture exactly in those words, of course. But the **patterns behind them do**.

And beneath them remains the defining issue of Romans 8:7:

“...it is not subject to the law of God...”

The mind has placed **its own judgment above submission to God**.

CVII. Spiritual Thinking Is Not Irrational Thinking

This distinction is important.

Scripture does **not** teach us to abandon reason.

Paul himself:

“...reasoned with them out of the scriptures.”
Acts 17:2 KJV

God says:

“Come now, and let us reason together...”
Isaiah 1:18 KJV

Wisdom and understanding are repeatedly commended.

The problem is not **reason**.

The problem is **reason separated from and exalted above God**.

The renewed mind reasons **under the authority of truth**.

That is why Paul says:

"...bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Not destroying thought.

Bringing thought into obedience.

CVIII. Faith Is Ultimately Subjection to God

We have now returned again to our central principle.

The spiritual mind believes God, receives His word, submits its understanding to Him, and walks accordingly even when natural sight cannot see the outcome.

The carnal mind makes **itself** the final judge.

That is exactly where mankind's departure began.

God said.

The serpent contradicted.

The tree appeared desirable.

Man chose contrary to God's word.

And Romans eventually gives the condition its unmistakable description:

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God..."
Romans 8:7 KJV

So the deepest problem with carnality is not merely that it produces certain bad behaviors.

Those behaviors are **fruit**.

At the root is a mind that is **not subject to God**.

And the mind of Christ gives us the perfect opposite:

"...nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."
Luke 22:42 KJV

I think the next place we should go is even deeper into **self**, because self-will, self-preservation, self-justification, self-exaltation, self-confidence, and self-righteousness

repeatedly appear behind carnal reasoning. Christ's command to **deny self and take up the cross** begins to look much larger when viewed against everything we have now established.

We have reached a place where Christ's command to **deny self** can be understood much more precisely. Scripture is not teaching that human personhood is evil or that a person should have no individual will, thought, care, or identity. Christ Himself had a will. The issue is whether **self occupies the place of government that belongs to God**.

The Carnal Mind

CIX. "Let Him Deny Himself"

Jesus says:

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."
Matthew 16:24 KJV

Notice the order:

deny himself

take up his cross

follow me

This immediately follows Peter's attempt to turn Christ away from the cross.

Peter had said:

"Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee."
Matthew 16:22 KJV

Jesus answered:

"...thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."
Matthew 16:23 KJV

Then He speaks about **denying self**.

So within the immediate context, self-denial stands directly against thinking according to **"the things...of men"** rather than **"the things...of God."**

CX. Self-Denial Is Not Self-Hatred

We need to establish this carefully.

Scripture does not command a person to despise himself as though God's creation has no value.

Jesus says:

“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”
Matthew 22:39 KJV

Paul says:

“For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it...”
Ephesians 5:29 KJV

Self-denial therefore cannot simply mean believing oneself worthless.

The question is **government**.

Self is denied the right to rule independently of God.

Christ's own prayer shows us this perfectly:

“Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”
Luke 22:42 KJV

There was a personal will:

“my will.”

But that will was completely submitted:

“but thine, be done.”

That is not destruction of personhood.

That is perfect subjection to God.

CXI. Self-Preservation

Jesus continues:

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.”
Matthew 16:25 KJV

The natural impulse is self-preservation.

Protect:

my life

my comfort

my position

my reputation

my possessions

my interests

But Jesus asks:

“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”
Matthew 16:26 KJV

The carnal mind evaluates according to immediate natural advantage.

Christ forces the mind to consider something higher.

What appears to be **gain** may actually be loss.

And what appears to be **loss for Christ** may actually be gain.

CXII. Loving One's Life

Jesus makes the same principle even stronger:

“He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.”
John 12:25 KJV

Then:

“If any man serve me, let him follow me...”
John 12:26 KJV

Again:

self-preservation

versus

following Christ.

This does not mean recklessness with physical life. Scripture contains examples of saints avoiding danger when appropriate.

The issue is whether preservation of self becomes more important than obedience to God.

CXIII. Self-Justification

Another manifestation of self is the desire to establish ourselves as right.

Luke records:

"And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts..."
Luke 16:15 KJV

That is revealing.

Man can construct a case that satisfies other people.

But:

"God knoweth your hearts."

The carnal mind is concerned with how the matter can be made to appear.

God looks at what actually resides within.

CXIV. The First Response After the Fall

We can see self-justification almost immediately after sin entered.

God asks Adam:

"Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?"
Genesis 3:11 KJV

Adam answers:

"The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."
Genesis 3:12 KJV

Then the woman:

"The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."
Genesis 3:13 KJV

Both acknowledged the act, but both immediately included an explanation directing attention elsewhere.

Adam:

“The woman whom thou gavest...”

Eve:

“The serpent beguiled me...”

This is striking because we are seeing something immediately after the fall that remains familiar throughout human conduct:

the impulse to explain ourselves in a manner that lessens our own responsibility.

CXV. Saul Shows Self-Justification Clearly

God commanded Saul concerning Amalek.

After Saul disobeyed, Samuel confronted him.

Saul initially says:

“Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD.”
1 Samuel 15:13 KJV

But Samuel asks:

“What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?”
1 Samuel 15:14 KJV

Saul responds:

“They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God...”
1 Samuel 15:15 KJV

Notice how easily disobedience can be given a spiritual explanation.

We kept them to sacrifice to God.

But Samuel brings the matter back to obedience:

“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”
1 Samuel 15:22 KJV

This is extremely important to our study.

A spiritual-sounding justification cannot turn disobedience into obedience.

CXVI. Rebellion and Stubbornness

Samuel continues:

“For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.”
1 Samuel 15:23 KJV

Why?

“Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD...”

There is the heart of the matter again.

God spoke.

Saul substituted his own course.

Then Saul attempted to justify the substitution.

The issue was:

“thou hast rejected the word of the LORD.”

That is remarkably close to what we have been tracing from Eden onward.

CXVII. Fear of Man Was Behind Saul's Disobedience

Eventually Saul admits:

“I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words...”
1 Samuel 15:24 KJV

Then he tells us why:

“...because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.”

What a statement.

Two voices were effectively before Saul:

God's command

and

the people's voice.

Saul says:

“I...obeyed their voice.”

That connects directly with:

"The fear of man bringeth a snare..."
Proverbs 29:25 KJV

Again the issue is **whose voice governs**.

CXVIII. Self-Righteousness

Self can also attempt to establish its own righteousness.

Jesus gives the parable of the Pharisee and publican specifically concerning:

"...certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:"
Luke 18:9 KJV

That introduction is very important:

"trusted in themselves."

The Pharisee prayed:

"God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are..."
Luke 18:11 KJV

Then he lists what he does:

"I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess."
Luke 18:12 KJV

Notice again that the outward things mentioned are not necessarily wrong.

Fasting.

Giving.

But self has taken these things and made them grounds for exaltation.

And comparison follows:

"I am not as other men are."

Self-righteousness and comparison naturally accompany one another.

CXIX. The Publican Has Nothing to Establish

The publican:

"...standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven..."
Luke 18:13 KJV

He says:

“God be merciful to me a sinner.”

Jesus concludes:

“...every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”
Luke 18:14 KJV

Again:

self-exaltation

versus

humility before God.

CXX. Self-Confidence

Peter provides another example.

Jesus tells the disciples:

“All ye shall be offended because of me this night...”
Matthew 26:31 KJV

Peter answers:

“Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.”
Matthew 26:33 KJV

Notice the comparison:

“Though all men...”

“yet will I never...”

Then:

“Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.”
Matthew 26:35 KJV

Peter sincerely believed himself stronger than he actually was.

Before morning:

"...he denied with an oath, I do not know the man."
Matthew 26:72 KJV

Then after the third denial:

"And he went out, and wept bitterly."
Matthew 26:75 KJV

Self-confidence had failed.

CXXI. Scripture Warns Against Confidence in the Flesh

Paul says:

"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."
Philippians 3:3 KJV

That phrase is worth remembering:

"no confidence in the flesh."

Paul could have had such confidence:

"Though I might also have confidence in the flesh..."
Philippians 3:4 KJV

He then lists his natural and outward grounds for confidence.

But concludes:

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."
Philippians 3:7 KJV

Again:

self-grounded confidence is displaced by Christ.

CXXII. Even Spiritual Ability Gives No Ground for Self-Glory

Paul asks:

"And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?"
1 Corinthians 4:7 KJV

That question cuts deeply into self-exaltation.

If it was **received**, why glory as though it originated with self?

This applies even to gifts used in the body.

“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.”
1 Corinthians 12:7 KJV

And:

“But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.”
1 Corinthians 12:11 KJV

Therefore a spiritual gift can never rightly become grounds for personal superiority.

Its source is **the Spirit**.

Its purpose is to **profit the body**.

CXXIII. Carnality Can Take Hold of Spiritual Gifts

This explains something important about Corinth.

They had spiritual gifts.

Paul says:

“...ye come behind in no gift...”
1 Corinthians 1:7 KJV

Yet later:

“...ye are yet carnal...”
1 Corinthians 3:3 KJV

So possessing a spiritual gift did not mean they could not behave carnally in its use or in their relationships.

This is extremely important.

Giftedness is not proof of spiritual maturity.

Paul had to teach a gifted congregation about envy, strife, division, order, edification, and love.

That is why 1 Corinthians 13 stands where it does.

CXXIV. Without Charity, Spiritual Activity Can Become Nothing

Paul says:

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”
1 Corinthians 13:1 KJV

Then:

“And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge...”
1 Corinthians 13:2 KJV

Even:

“...though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.”

This is extraordinary.

Knowledge does not prove the absence of carnality.

Gift does not prove it.

Ability does not prove it.

Powerful outward activity does not prove it.

The **fruit** still matters.

CXXV. Knowledge Itself Can Feed Self

Paul says:

“Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.”
1 Corinthians 8:1 KJV

Knowledge is not evil. Scripture repeatedly commands knowledge and understanding.

But knowledge can be possessed in a way that:

“puffeth up.”

That means even **truth itself can become an occasion for self-exaltation** if the heart is wrong.

A person can know something true and become proud because he knows it.

The problem is not the truth.

The problem is **self's relationship to the truth**.

CXXVI. This Is Particularly Important Among the Saints

We can now understand why carnality can become difficult to recognize among God's people.

It may attach itself to:

knowledge

doctrine

gifts

ministry

service

giving

prayer

zeal

correction

leadership

or even a defense of truth.

The subject may be entirely right while **self is operating within it**.

That is why the question cannot merely be:

Is what I am saying true?

We must also ask:

What is producing this?

Why am I doing it?

Whose glory am I seeking?

Am I subject to God?

What fruit is being produced?

CXXVII. John the Baptist Gives Us the Opposite Spirit

John's disciples became concerned when people began going to Jesus.

They said:

"...behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him."
John 3:26 KJV

That could easily have become competition.

But John answered:

"A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven."
John 3:27 KJV

Then he says of Christ:

"He must increase, but I must decrease."
John 3:30 KJV

That is almost a perfect opposite to carnal ambition.

Not:

How do I preserve my following?

Not:

Why are people going to Him instead of me?

But:

"He must increase, but I must decrease."

CXXVIII. Christ Is the Center, Not Self

Paul expresses the same principle:

"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."
2 Corinthians 4:5 KJV

That verse gives us a beautiful ordering:

Christ Jesus → Lord

ourselves → servants

Carnality reverses that order by bringing self toward the center.

The mind of Christ puts **God's will, God's glory, and the good of others ahead of self-exaltation**.

CXXIX. The Cross Strikes at the Government of Self

Now Christ's command becomes much clearer:

"...let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."
Matthew 16:24 KJV

The cross is not merely enduring unpleasant circumstances.

In the passages we have examined, it reaches directly into the question:

Who governs this life?

The old man is:

"...crucified with him..."
Romans 6:6 KJV

Those who belong to Christ:

"...have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."
Galatians 5:24 KJV

And Paul says:

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me..."
Galatians 2:20 KJV

There is perhaps our clearest statement yet:

"yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

Not the destruction of the person.

Paul still says:

"I live."

But the governing life is now:

"Christ liveth in me."

CXXX. Christ Manifested in You

And here our study unexpectedly meets the title of our previous study.

We called it:

The Fruit of the Spirit: Christ Manifested in You

Now we can see the opposite side of that truth.

The purpose is not merely to suppress obvious works of the flesh while self remains enthroned.

It is:

"...Christ liveth in me..."
Galatians 2:20 KJV

And:

"For to me to live is Christ..."
Philippians 1:21 KJV

The more clearly we see this, the more the entire subject of the carnal mind comes together.

At its deepest level, the issue is not simply **bad thoughts versus good thoughts**.

It is not even merely **sinful behavior versus righteous behavior**.

It concerns **the source and government of the life**:

self or Christ

flesh or Spirit

man's way or God's way

man's wisdom or wisdom from above

not subject to God or led by the Spirit of God

works of the flesh or fruit of the Spirit

And that leads naturally to one more very important area: **how Scripture teaches us to discern carnality in ourselves without falling into unhealthy self-occupation or judging everything by feelings.** The answer cannot be endless introspection. Scripture gives us something much sounder: **the Word, the Spirit, the fruit, and an honest willingness to be searched and corrected by God.**

This is an important safeguard to everything we have studied. After identifying so many manifestations of carnality, we do not want to turn inward and begin endlessly analyzing ourselves according to feelings. Scripture gives us a much sounder means of examination.

The Carnal Mind

CXXXI. How Do We Recognize Carnality in Ourselves?

David prayed:

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:"
Psalm 139:23 KJV

Then:

"And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."
Psalm 139:24 KJV

Notice who does the searching:

"Search me, O God."

David is willing to be examined, but he is not making his own perception the final judge.

He asks God to expose what is within and then:

"lead me."

That is consistent with our entire study.

The answer to carnality remains **subjection to God**.

CXXXII. The Heart Cannot Safely Examine Itself Apart From God

We previously read:

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"
Jeremiah 17:9 KJV

The next verse answers:

"I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins..."
Jeremiah 17:10 KJV

This is why endless self-analysis cannot be our standard.

If the heart can deceive, then merely asking, **"How do I feel about my motives?"** is insufficient.

God searches the heart.

And He has given us His Word.

CXXXIII. The Word Discerns What Is Within

Hebrews says:

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword..."
Hebrews 4:12 KJV

Then:

"...and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

That is exactly what we need.

Not merely the outward action.

The Word reaches:

thoughts

and

intents of the heart.

A person may justify himself.

The Word can expose the motive underneath the justification.

A person may call something wisdom.

The Word can reveal whether it is wisdom from above.

A person may call something zeal.

The Word can expose envy or strife beneath it.

The Word gives us an objective standard beyond our own judgment.

CXXXIV. Scripture Functions Like a Mirror

James gives us another picture:

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."
James 1:22 KJV

Again we encounter **deception**.

Then:

“For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:”
James 1:23 KJV

The Word shows us what is there.

But merely seeing is insufficient.

James continues:

“But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein...”
James 1:25 KJV

The purpose of examination is not simply to discover faults.

It is to **respond to what God shows us**.

CXXXV. The Spirit Also Searches

Paul says:

“But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”
1 Corinthians 2:10 KJV

Jesus said of the Spirit:

“...he will guide you into all truth...”
John 16:13 KJV

And earlier:

“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:”
John 16:8 KJV

So again we find the relationship we have already studied:

Word and Spirit together.

The Spirit does not lead contrary to the Word He inspired, and the Word provides the truth by which thoughts and intentions are exposed.

CXXXVI. Examine Yourselves

Paul does tell the saints to examine themselves:

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.”
2 Corinthians 13:5 KJV

Likewise:

“But let a man examine himself...”
1 Corinthians 11:28 KJV

So self-examination has a proper place.

But biblical self-examination is not endless preoccupation with ourselves.

It is examination **according to God's truth**.

We are not inventing hidden sins or judging ourselves according to changing emotions.

We are bringing ourselves honestly before God and His Word.

CXXXVII. Paul Warns Against Making Our Own Judgment Final

Paul says something particularly helpful:

“But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment...”
1 Corinthians 4:3 KJV

Then:

“...yea, I judge not mine own self.”

Why?

“For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.”
1 Corinthians 4:4 KJV

That is a valuable safeguard.

Paul's conscience did not presently accuse him, but he did not therefore conclude that his own judgment was infallible.

“He that judgeth me is the Lord.”

Our own feelings are not the final court.

God is.

CXXXVIII. Fruit Gives Evidence

Jesus repeatedly directs attention to fruit:

“Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”
Matthew 7:20 KJV

And:

“For every tree is known by his own fruit.”
Luke 6:44 KJV

Therefore, when examining whether something is operating from the flesh or Spirit, Scripture allows us to look at what it consistently produces.

Galatians has already given us the contrast.

Does it produce:

hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, envy?

Or:

love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance?

James gives another test.

Does the supposed wisdom produce:

envying, strife, confusion?

Or is it:

pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits?

Fruit does not replace the Word.

Rather, the Word tells us **how to identify the fruit**.

CXXXIX. Correction Is Part of Spiritual Life

Another revealing question is:

What happens when we are corrected?

Proverbs says:

“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.”
Proverbs 12:15 KJV

And:

“Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction: but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured.”
Proverbs 13:18 KJV

A mind determined to preserve self cannot easily receive correction.

But James describes wisdom from above as:

“...easy to be intreated...”
James 3:17 KJV

That does not mean accepting every human accusation as true.

Everything still must be judged according to truth.

But a spiritual mind is **teachable before God**.

It does not have to defend self at all costs.

CXL. Peter Gives Us a Beautiful Example of Correction

Earlier we saw Peter resist Christ:

“Be it far from thee, Lord...”
Matthew 16:22 KJV

Jesus corrected him severely.

Peter also denied Christ.

Yet after the resurrection, Christ dealt directly with Peter:

“Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?”
John 21:15 KJV

Three times Jesus asks him.

Then gives him work:

“Feed my sheep.”
John 21:17 KJV

Peter's failures were exposed, but exposure was not the end.

Christ restored direction.

This agrees beautifully with David:

“Search me...”

then:

“lead me in the way everlasting.”

God exposes in order to bring us into His way.

CXLI. Conviction Should Lead to Repentance, Not Endless Condemnation

Paul writes:

“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of...”
2 Corinthians 7:10 KJV

There is a sorrow that produces something:

repentance.

Paul continues by describing what their repentance produced:

“...what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal...”
2 Corinthians 7:11 KJV

Godly conviction moves somewhere.

It brings change.

It does not merely keep a person circling endlessly around himself.

CXLII. Confession Is Agreement With God

John writes:

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
1 John 1:9 KJV

When God exposes something, the answer is not self-defense.

Neither is it despair.

It is honest acknowledgment before God.

Then there is:

forgiveness

and

cleansing.

Again, God's purpose is not merely exposure.

It is restoration to righteousness.

CXLIII. Walking in the Light

The same chapter says:

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another...”
1 John 1:7 KJV

This gives us a much healthier picture than continual fear of hidden carnality.

The saint's calling is to:

walk in the light.

When God reveals something contrary to that light, we respond to Him.

We do not need to manufacture darkness that He has not shown.

We walk according to the light we have received while remaining open to further light from God.

CXLIV. A Tender Heart Before God

David's response after his sin gives us another important picture:

“For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it...”
Psalm 51:16 KJV

Then:

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”
Psalm 51:17 KJV

Again, compare Saul.

Saul initially justified himself.

David, when brought to acknowledgment, says:

“Against thee, thee only, have I sinned...”
Psalm 51:4 KJV

The spiritual response to God's correction is not:

How can I prove myself right?

It is:

Lord, show me what is right.

CXLV. The Goal Is Not Self-Occupation

This is where we need to be particularly clear.

The purpose of examining carnality is **not to become occupied with ourselves**.

Paul says:

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...”
Hebrews 12:2 KJV

And:

“Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”
Colossians 3:2 KJV

The spiritual life is not lived by staring continually inward.

Our attention is directed toward **Christ**.

The Word searches us.

The Spirit leads us.

Fruit reveals what is operating.

Correction instructs us.

When something is exposed, we yield it to God and continue walking in the light.

CXLVI. A Simple Scriptural Pattern Emerges

We can therefore see a very practical pattern.

God's Word reveals.

“...a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

God's Spirit leads.

"...he will guide you into all truth."

Fruit manifests the source.

"...by their fruits ye shall know them."

The saint remains willing to be searched.

"Search me, O God..."

When wrong is exposed, it is acknowledged.

"If we confess our sins..."

The mind is brought into obedience.

"...bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

And the walk continues in the light.

"...if we walk in the light, as he is in the light..."

That is quite different from anxious introspection.

It is a life of **openness and subjection to God**.

CXLVII. The Safest Position Is Not "I Could Never Be Carnal"

Paul gives this warning:

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."
1 Corinthians 10:12 KJV

Nor is the safe position:

"Everything I think must be wrong."

Scripture gives us neither pride nor continual self-condemnation.

Instead:

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."
Proverbs 3:5 KJV

And:

“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”
Proverbs 3:6 KJV

That brings us almost perfectly back to the central issue of the entire study:

Who governs?

CXLVIII. The Heart of Discernment

So when we recognize something that may be carnal, the question is not simply:

Does this feel carnal?

Nor merely:

Do other people approve of it?

Nor:

Can I justify it logically?

Nor even:

Have I always believed this?

The question is:

What does God's Word say?

What is the fruit?

Is this according to the Spirit?

Am I willing for God to correct me?

Is my thought being brought into the obedience of Christ?

And underneath all of those questions remains the one we have found repeatedly:

Am I subject to God?

Because Scripture's definition remains:

“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God...”
Romans 8:7 KJV

And its opposite:

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”
Romans 8:14 KJV

We are now ready for the **final segment**. There I would like to bring the entire study together from **Genesis 1 through the fall, the two seeds, the natural man, the old man and the flesh, the carnal mind, the new birth, the new man, the renewed mind, and finally the mind of Christ**. That should give us one clear scriptural picture of what we mean when we speak of **the carnal mind**, and, just as importantly, God's complete answer to it.

Let us bring the whole matter together now. We began at creation because we could not properly understand the **carnal mind** without first understanding what man was before sin entered. Having followed the subject through Scripture, we can now see both the condition and God's answer to it.

The Carnal Mind

CXLIX. In the Beginning, Man Was Created After God

Our study began here:

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...”
Genesis 1:26 KJV

And:

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him...”
Genesis 1:27 KJV

Then:

“And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.”
Genesis 1:31 KJV

This established something essential at the very beginning:

Carnality was not man's original nature.

We therefore should not speak carelessly of the carnal condition as though it were simply what it means to be human.

God created man.

God created him in His image.

God called His creation **very good**.

The carnal condition came afterward.

CL. The Departure Began With Another Word

God had said:

"...thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."
Genesis 2:17 KJV

The serpent said:

"Ye shall not surely die:"
Genesis 3:4 KJV

There were now two contrary words before man.

God had spoken.

The serpent contradicted God.

Then the woman saw:

"...that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise..."
Genesis 3:6 KJV

And she took.

Here we saw the beginning of a pattern that continued throughout our entire study:

God's Word

versus

another judgment.

Man departed from subjection to God.

CLI. Sin and Death Entered

Paul later explains:

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin..."
Romans 5:12 KJV

Sin **entered**.

Death **entered through sin**.

Again, these were not presented as elements of God's original creation of man.

They came through disobedience.

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners..."
Romans 5:19 KJV

The issue at the beginning was therefore already the issue we eventually found in Romans 8:

subjection to God.

CLII. The Two Seeds Appear

Immediately after the fall, God says to the serpent:

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed..."
Genesis 3:15 KJV

From there Scripture increasingly reveals two contrary lines.

Cain is later described:

"...who was of that wicked one..."
1 John 3:12 KJV

Jesus tells certain men:

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do."
John 8:44 KJV

And John says:

"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil..."
1 John 3:10 KJV

We repeatedly found the same principle:

source becomes manifest through what it produces.

The tree becomes known by its fruit.

CLIII. The Fallen Condition Reaches the Thoughts

By Genesis 6 the inward condition is unmistakable:

"...every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."
Genesis 6:5 KJV

The problem was not merely outward acts.

It reached:

the heart

the imagination

the thoughts.

Christ later confirms the same truth:

"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts..."
Mark 7:21 KJV

Sin operates from within outward.

CLIV. Man Turns to His Own Way

Scripture repeatedly describes fallen man's direction:

"...we have turned every one to his own way..."
Isaiah 53:6 KJV

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."
Proverbs 14:12 KJV

"Be not wise in thine own eyes..."
Proverbs 3:7 KJV

And:

"...neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD."
Isaiah 55:8 KJV

We began to see the essence of the problem long before reaching the expression **carnal mind**.

Man establishes:

his own way

his own judgment

his own wisdom

rather than remaining wholly governed by God.

CLV. The Natural Man Cannot Receive Spiritual Things

Paul then showed us the **natural man**:

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God..."
1 Corinthians 2:14 KJV

Why?

"...for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

This brought us to an important distinction.

Being naturally intelligent does not produce spiritual understanding.

Spiritual things require **spiritual discernment**.

And Paul gives the opposite:

"But he that is spiritual judgeth all things..."
1 Corinthians 2:15 KJV

Then:

"But we have the mind of Christ."
1 Corinthians 2:16 KJV

CLVI. Carnality Can Also Manifest Among Brethren

Immediately afterward Paul says:

"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal..."
1 Corinthians 3:1 KJV

This kept us from making **natural man** and **carnal brethren** automatically identical expressions.

These were brethren.

Yet:

"For ye are yet carnal..."
1 Corinthians 3:3 KJV

How was it manifest?

"...there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions..."

Carnality was visible in their conduct toward one another.

CLVII. The Carnal Mind Is Finally Defined

Then we reached Romans 8:

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

And finally:

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God..."
Romans 8:7 KJV

Why?

"...for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

After everything we have studied, this appears to be the central scriptural description:

The carnal mind is not subject to God.

That explains why so many different manifestations can all be carnal.

Lust can be carnal.

Pride can be carnal.

Fear can be carnal.

Human wisdom can be carnal.

Division can be carnal.

Self-righteousness can be carnal.

Even apparently spiritual activity can be approached carnally.

The outward forms differ.

The underlying issue remains:

Who governs?

CLVIII. The Flesh Produces Its Own Works

Galatians made the source visible:

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest...”
Galatians 5:19 KJV

Then Paul identifies:

uncleanness

idolatry

hatred

variance

emulations

wrath

strife

seditions

heresies

envyings

and others.

The list includes both sensual sins and relational sins.

That was important.

Carnality is not limited to bodily appetite.

It manifests through:

pride

competition

envy

contention

division

self-exaltation

and **self-will**.

CLIX. Self Lies Near the Center

Christ said:

"...let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."
Matthew 16:24 KJV

We saw that self-denial is not self-hatred.

The issue is **self-government**.

Christ Himself expressed a personal will:

"...nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."
Luke 22:42 KJV

That may be one of the clearest pictures of the opposite of carnality.

Romans says the carnal mind is:

"not subject"

Christ says:

"not my will, but thine."

The contrast is unmistakable.

CLX. The Old Man Is Not Rehabilitated

Then Scripture introduced the **old man**:

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him..."
Romans 6:6 KJV

And:

"...that henceforth we should not serve sin."

The answer was not the gradual improvement of the old man.

It was:

crucifixion.

Paul says:

"...our old man is crucified..."

Galatians says:

“And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”
Galatians 5:24 KJV

This is why the gospel cannot be reduced to making fallen man behave somewhat better.

Something much greater occurs.

CLXI. “Ye Must Be Born Again”

Christ said:

“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”
John 3:3 KJV

And:

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”
John 3:6 KJV

Then:

“Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”
John 3:7 KJV

There is God's answer.

Not flesh educating itself into Spirit.

Birth of the Spirit.

CLXII. Born of God

John says:

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God...”
John 1:12 KJV

Then:

“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”
John 1:13 KJV

And later:

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him...”
1 John 3:9 KJV

Then immediately:

“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil...”
1 John 3:10 KJV

We are back to:

birth

seed

children

manifestation

fruit.

The thread we first saw in Genesis continues.

CLXIII. The New Man Is “After God”

Paul says:

“And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”
Ephesians 4:24 KJV

Colossians says:

“And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:”
Colossians 3:10 KJV

And suddenly we find ourselves back at Genesis:

“...in the image of God created he him...”

This is why beginning at creation mattered so much.

The biblical story did not begin with man carnal.

It began with man **created after God**.

Sin entered.

Man fell.

But in Christ Scripture again speaks of:

the new man

“after God”

“after the image of him that created him.”

That is a beautiful completion of the circle.

CLXIV. The Mind Must Be Renewed

The new birth does not make the instruction concerning the mind unnecessary.

Paul says:

“And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;”
Ephesians 4:23 KJV

And:

“...be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind...”
Romans 12:2 KJV

Why?

“...that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

The renewed mind increasingly comes into agreement with **the will of God**.

Again, this is the opposite of:

my own way

my own wisdom

my own will

as the governing standard.

CLXV. Every Thought Brought Into Obedience

Paul describes:

“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God...”
2 Corinthians 10:5 KJV

Then:

“...bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”

This does not destroy thought.

It puts thought into its proper place:

under Christ.

Reason remains.

Understanding remains.

Personality remains.

Individuality remains.

But they are no longer to operate independently of God.

They are brought into:

“the obedience of Christ.”

CLXVI. The Mind of Christ

Now we can understand the destination.

“But we have the mind of Christ.”
1 Corinthians 2:16 KJV

What does that mind look like?

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:”
Philippians 2:5 KJV

Christ:

“...made himself of no reputation...”
Philippians 2:7 KJV

And:

“...humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”
Philippians 2:8 KJV

There it is again:

obedience.

The carnal mind:

not subject to God.

The mind of Christ:

obedient unto death.

CLXVII. The Spirit Produces What the Flesh Cannot

Galatians gives us the other fruit:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,"
Galatians 5:22 KJV

"Meekness, temperance..."
Galatians 5:23 KJV

This is not merely outward conformity.

It is **fruit**.

Something living within produces something visible without.

And now our previous study fits perfectly into this one:

The Fruit of the Spirit: Christ Manifested in You.

Paul says:

"...Christ liveth in me..."
Galatians 2:20 KJV

That is the answer to the government of self.

CLXVIII. Flesh and Spirit

We can now put the major contrast very simply.

The flesh says:
My way.

Faith says:
God's way.

The flesh says:
My wisdom.

The spiritual mind receives:
Wisdom from above.

The flesh says:
My will.

Christ says:
“Not my will, but thine.”

The carnal mind:
“is not subject to the law of God.”

The sons of God:
“are led by the Spirit of God.”

The flesh produces:
works of the flesh.

The Spirit produces:
fruit of the Spirit.

The old man:
is crucified.

The new man:
is created after God in righteousness and true holiness.

The carnal mind:
is death.

The spiritual mind:
is life and peace.

CLXIX. Natural Man, Carnal Mind, Flesh, Old Man, New Man

We also wanted to finish by keeping the scriptural terms clear rather than carelessly making them interchangeable.

The **natural man** is described in **1 Corinthians 2:14** as one who does not receive the things of the Spirit of God because they are spiritually discerned.

The **carnal mind** is described in **Romans 8:6–7** as death, enmity against God, and not subject to God's law.

The **flesh**, depending upon context, can simply refer to physical humanity or the body; but when contrasted with the Spirit, Scripture speaks of its lusts, its works, and walking after it.

The **old man** is described as corrupt according to deceitful lusts and as crucified with Christ.

The **new man** is described as created **after God in righteousness and true holiness**, renewed after the image of the Creator.

And the **spiritual mind** is characterized by life and peace, spiritual discernment, subjection to God, and ultimately:

“the mind of Christ.”

Keeping those distinctions prevents us from forcing every passage into terminology Scripture itself does not use.

CLXX. So What Is the Carnal Mind?

After following the entire subject, I think Scripture permits us to answer quite simply:

The **carnal mind is the mind governed according to the flesh rather than the Spirit, arising from the fallen condition brought through sin, and characterized fundamentally by non-subjection and enmity toward God.**

It therefore thinks, desires, judges, chooses, and acts independently of or contrary to God's government.

Its manifestations include lust, pride, self-will, self-righteousness, envy, strife, wrath, division, vainglory, fear of man, confidence in flesh, worldly wisdom, unbelief, and reliance upon human understanding apart from God.

But those manifestations are the **fruit**.

At the root is:

“...it is not subject to the law of God...”
Romans 8:7 KJV

CLXXI. And What Is God's Answer?

Not merely education.

Not merely stronger human will.

Not merely outward restraint.

Not merely better habits.

Not merely more rules.

God's answer is **Christ**.

“Ye must be born again.”
John 3:7 KJV

"...our old man is crucified with him..."
Romans 6:6 KJV

"...the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."
Romans 8:2 KJV

"...put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."
Ephesians 4:24 KJV

"...be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..."
Romans 12:2 KJV

"...Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."
Galatians 5:16 KJV

And finally:

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:"
Philippians 2:5 KJV

CLXXII. From the Image of God to the Mind of Christ

And perhaps this is the simplest way to see the whole study.

We began with:

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..."
Genesis 1:26 KJV

We saw man's departure through disobedience.

We followed sin and death.

We saw the heart, thoughts, flesh, self-will, carnal mind, and old man.

Then came Christ.

The old man is crucified.

Man is born of the Spirit.

The new man is:

"...after God..."

and:

"...after the image of him that created him."

The mind is renewed.

The saint walks in the Spirit.

The Spirit produces His fruit.

And finally Scripture says:

“But we have the mind of Christ.”
1 Corinthians 2:16 KJV

So the story of the carnal mind is ultimately not merely a study of what went wrong with man.

It is also the story of what God does **in Christ**.

From man's departure from the image in which he was created, through sin, self-will, and death, to the new man **after God**, the renewed mind, the indwelling Spirit, and **Christ manifested in the life**.

And that brings the study home:

The carnal mind is not subject to God.

The mind of Christ says, “Not my will, but thine.”

“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”
Romans 8:6 KJV