

1.

Romans 8:6 explained

‘To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace’

Life ... peace ... death! Who would not choose life and peace? But these, says Paul, result only from a person being spiritually minded. Not to have such a mind is equivalent to death. Paul allows no third possibility. So what is spiritual mindedness? What is meant by life and peace? How are we to know whether we are spiritually minded or not? These are the matters I want to try and examine in this book.

They are not simple matters, for we may often be aware of the influence of *both* spiritual mindedness and of earthly mindedness at the same time. Christians will be aware of continual battles between the two (Galatians 5:17). How can we tell what kind of mind we really have? How can we be sure we do not deceive ourselves? To be controlled by earthly mindedness means that we cannot please God (Romans 8:8), and therefore we will die (Romans 8:13). That is a sad contrast to life and peace!

What does Paul mean by spiritual mindedness? The word ‘spirit’ in Scripture can mean either ‘the Holy Spirit’ (as in Romans 8:9) or ‘the new spiritual life produced in the believer by the Holy Spirit’ (as in John 3:6). By spiritual mindedness, I suggest, Paul means here *‘the activity of this new spiritual life in the believer’*.

This new spiritual life causes the believer to think about, and delight in, spiritual things; which was never a habit before conversion! Unbelievers love only the things of this earth, but believers now give higher priority to loving the things of God.

We can define spiritual mindedness as consisting of three things: the mind always actively directing thoughts to spiritual things; a growing love for spiritual things; a real sense of satisfaction experienced by the believer which is produced by spiritual things.

In our verse, Paul makes the point that this spiritual mindedness is the chief distinguishing mark of a believer and that it alone leads to life and peace. Then how vital it must be!

It may help to look briefly at what it means to be earthly minded. We can then appreciate better the value of spiritual mindedness. For example, when people are earthly minded, the love of earthly things dominates their minds. There is no love for spiritual things. Even true Christians can sometimes love the things of this world too much. Then their spiritual life becomes unhealthy. They will not have the peace that healthy spiritual life brings. Some people know about spiritual things but cannot bring themselves to seek them. In all these examples, earthly mindedness is shown to be the enemy of spiritual mindedness.

So, I suggest that those who have no desire to achieve the highest possible level of spiritual mindedness and are content with less, give no real evidence that they are true believers.

They *may* have spiritual life, but they will not have God’s peace. They may even be deceiving themselves and not be possessors of spiritual life at all.