

# Gamma

**Romans 8:1-13**

## **Study 13 Fighting Sin with the Spirit**

### **Case 1**

**Manga Low was fascinated when he attended the Church of Subang Jaya because the pastor was always preaching about the Holy Spirit. When the sermon revolved about Romans 8 : *“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace”***

**(Romans 8:5-6 ESV)**

**Manga wanted to be taught how to speak in tongues and attended a class on prophecy as well as one on healing. He reasoned that these are the things of the Spirit and when he was doing this he was setting his mind on the Spirit. He struggled with his business and adopted some shady practices like short changing his customers and misrepresenting facts about the items he sold. When he was found out , he felt very guilty and did not go to church for weeks on end. Then he came back to church and he continued to speak in tongues every day and started to prophesy over people because it made him feel close to God. He started to pay more and more tithing to the church. He attended church almost 3-4 times/ week.**

**1. Has Manga properly understood what it means to have the mind set on the Spirit? What does Paul mean about setting our minds on the things of the Spirit?**

Paul says the connection between living and thinking is a tight and close one. Literally he says: “For those being according to the flesh *mind* the things of the flesh, but those being according to the spirit *mind* the things of the Spirit.” In other words, whatever you have set your mind upon shapes your lifestyle and character. But what does it mean to “mind” something or “set the mind?” Even in English, when the word “mind” is used as a verb, it has a stronger meaning than simply “to think about.” It means to focus intently on something, to be preoccupied with something, to have the attention and the imagination totally captured by something.

Archbishop William Temple once said, “Your religion is what you do with your solitude.” In other words, wherever your mind goes most naturally and freely (when there is nothing else to distract it), *that* is what you really live *for*. That is your religion. Your life is shaped by that which preoccupies your mind.

b) What are the “things of the Spirit?” This is not the same thing as simply thinking about religion all the time, or theology in general. Manga thinks it is the spectacular supernatural manifestations of the Spirit which is why he is always attending classes to this effect. The “things” of the Spirit would be those things to which the Spirit draws attention; to mind the Spirit would be to be preoccupied by the things the Spirit is preoccupied with. What are those? In the rest of chapter 8, we see that the Spirit comes to show us that we are sons and daughters of the Lord. (We will explore this much more next week.) Notice in v.14 that those who are led by the Spirit are sons of God. Verses 15-16 tell us that the Spirit removes a sense of fear of rejection and assures us we are God’s beloved children. Verses 26-27 tell us the Spirit gives us confidence to approach God in prayer. In other words, the rest of Romans 8 tells us what the Spirit is preoccupied with — how in Christ we are adopted, loved, welcomed.

A parallel passage is Colossians 3:1-4. “Since you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated... your life is now hid with Christ in God...” Here Paul tells us to be preoccupied with “things above” — we are to remember we have been raised with Christ and are accepted in him before the Father. The Holy Spirit is not mentioned here, but the principle is the same. **We are to be preoccupied with our standing in Christ. We are to drill into our minds and hearts his love and adoption of us.** To “mind the things of the Spirit” means to never forget our privileged standing, to never forget we are love

**2. How has his misunderstanding about setting the mind on the Spirit led to his current behavior when he left the church for a while and then came back and attended even more vigorously?**

Manga has a basic misunderstanding about the work of the Holy Spirit. He equated the speaking in tongues and ministry gifts to closeness to God. The work of the Spirit involves regeneration in conversion, sanctification as we are moulded closer and closer to the image of God and assurance with anointing for ministry. Just because God uses us for ministry with power does not mean that we are closer to Him. Ministry and gifts are not a proxy for the relationship and sanctification which is the primary focus of a Christian. The work of the Spirit in sanctifying us will produce the fruit of the Spirit namely love, joy, peace etc.

### 3. How to we live by the Spirit and put to death the deeds of the body in v 13

How it works is like a two stroke engine there is Aspiration and Mortification or putting to death the old nature.

Aspiration, it means the changing of one's motivation to sin by remembering to apply the gospel. It looks at the motives of the heart. Verse 12 says, "Therefore, brethren, we have an obligation — but it is not to the sinful nature..." This is a critical statement. "Therefore" refers to the statement before, in which Paul tells us we have been redeemed by Christ's righteousness and we will some day be totally delivered from all evil and pain in the bodily resurrection. Then Paul turns and says, "Therefore we have an obligation..." Some translations say, "Therefore we are debtors — but NOT to the sinful nature." **Paul means if we remember what Christ has done and will do for us, we will feel the obligations of love and gratitude to serve and know him.**

Paul is saying that sin can only be cut off at the root if we expose ourselves constantly to the unimaginable love of Christ for us. That exposure stimulates a wave of gratitude and a feeling of indebtedness. Sin only can grow in the soil of self-pity and a feeling of "owed-ness." "I'm not getting a fair shake! I'm not getting my needs met! I've had a hard life! God owes me; people owe me; I owe me!" That's the heart-attitude of "owedness." But Paul says, you must remind yourself that you are a debtor. You bathe yourself in the remembrance of the grace of God — that will loosen, weaken, and kill sin at the motivational level.

Mortification( putting to death)

We should notice the progression of thought here. In vv.9-11, Paul is saying that when we received Christ and became righteous in God's sight, the Holy Spirit came in and made us spiritually alive. (v.10 — "Your spirit is alive because of righteousness.") Someday, even our bodies will be totally renewed and eternally alive by the Spirit. (v.11 — "He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit.") But there is still within us, which is hostile and inimical to our growing spiritual life, the remaining sin nature. And Paul says here that, "If you let the remaining sinful nature alone — if you allow it to prosper and grow, there will be terrible trouble. Instead, you must *by the Spirit* attack and put it to death." The more you put to death the sinful nature, the more you will enjoy the spiritual life that the Holy Spirit gives — life and peace (v.6). This process of "putting to death" is what the older theologians used to call "mortification." They got it from the old King James translation of the verse — "If ye through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

Mortification means ruthless full-hearted resistance to sinful practice. The very word translated “put to death” (Greek word *thanatoute*) is violent and total. It means a “ruthless rejection of all practices we know to be wrong” (John Stott). It means to declare war on attitudes and behaviors that are wrong — to give them no quarter, take no prisoners, to pull out all the stops. It means a Christian doesn’t play games with sin. You don’t “taper off” or say, “I can keep it under control.” You get as far away from it as possible. You don’t just avoid things you know are sin, but things that lead to it, and even things that are doubtful. This is war! Putting to death!

Therefore, “putting to death” (v.13) is just one form, a sub-set under “setting the mind on the things of the Spirit” (vv.5-6). Mortification is withering a sin’s power over you by focusing on Christ’s redemption in such a way as to soften your heart with gratitude and love which brings you to hate the sin for itself, so it loses its power of attraction over you.

**Sum:** We “kill sin in the Spirit” when we 1) soften our heart from sinful motivations with a sense of our debt to love and grace 2) minding the things of the Spirit. 3. by turn from sinful practices ruthlessly.

**4. Write down some very practical ways in which you can “put to death” a particular sin pattern. What will you say to your heart that can undercut sin’s power over you? Share with others your experiences**

The key to this exercise is to write down “grace-centered mini-sermons” you can preach to yourself during the day, especially when tempted. (Remember from v.5 — your life is an expression of your mind.) Most Christians try to control themselves with “law-centered mini-sermons.” In other words, we say to ourselves things like: “God will get me” OR “It’s against my Christian principles” OR “It will hurt people around me” OR “I will be embarrassed” OR “It will hurt my self-esteem” OR “I’ll be caught” OR “I’ll hate myself in the morning.” Some or all of these may be true, but Paul tells us — inadequate! They don’t kill. That is taking your sin to the law and using the sense of fear to deter yourself.

But we are to use the logic of the gospel on ourselves. “Look what he’s done for me! Is this how I respond to him?”

“A legalistic conviction of sin ariseth from a consideration of God’s justice chiefly, but an evangelical conviction of sin comes from a sense of God’s

goodness and grace. A legally convicted person cries out, 'I have exasperated a power that is as the roaring of a lion... I have provoked one that is the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, whose word can tear up the foundation of the world...' But an evangelically convicted person cries, 'I have incensed a goodness that is like the dropping of the dew; I have offended a God who comes to me as a loving friend!... Is my heart made of marble or iron to be so hard?'

– Stephen Charnock, *Works*, vol.4, p.199 Here is how one old pastor preached to his heart with the gospel:

“What have I done? What love, mercy, what blood, what grace have I despised and trampled upon? Is this the return I make to the Father for his love, to the Son for his blood, to the Spirit for his grace? Do I thus requite the Lord? Have I defiled the heart that Christ died to wash?... What can I say to the dear Lord Jesus?... Do I account communion with him of so little value?... Shall I endeavor to disappoint the very purpose of the death of Christ?”

– John Owen, *On Mortification*

## Case 2

**Felicity Lum attends a church in Subang Jaya where the Holy Spirit plays a pretty dominant role. She is quite dismissive of conservative churches as they just fill you with head knowledge and no heart knowledge. She says she is not much into bible study as the knowledge always puffs up. She has been a Christian for 15 years and never does any bible studies just reads her daily bread. She is into prayer and spends most days in prayer. She receives message from God in terms of impressions. God will tell her that this person or that person is in trouble and she will seek to minister to them.**

**On the weekends she usually comes up to the front of her church to be ministered to prayed over and many times to be “slain in the Spirit” where she feels the power of the Spirit surge through her body like electricity. This is the filling of the Spirit.**

**She runs a neighborhood bar and many of her workers despise her as she is a hard woman and very tight fisted. They never accept her invitations to church. She is loud and finds faults with more people she comes into contact.**

### **1. Is Felicity really being filled with the Holy Spirit? How do you know?**

Felicity does not fill the biblical definition of being filled with the Spirit. There is no exhibition of the fruit of the Spirit in her life. There is no endearment to the Word of God. It does not play a large role in her life as she is only ever at Daily Bread even after 15 years as a believer.

We are not sure as to whether the Spirit really speaks to her and inner impressions are often very subjective even if the promptings are to minister to people in need.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?<sup>10</sup>  
“I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds

(Jeremiah 17:9-10 ESV)

What ever her messages from the Spirit are it must be according to the truth which is the Word

**2. What is the relationship between the Spirit and the Word looking at Col 3: 16 and Ephesians 5:18-19. What is the proper biblical explanation of being filled with the Spirit in these verses?**

Being filled with the Spirit is being filled with the Word , it is inextricably linked. Hence Felicity needs to engage with the Word to be filled with the Spirit.

She cannot just seek the emotional experience of the Spirit and not the Word they come together

**3. What does the Spirit do to the Word**

The Spirit's job is to highlight the Word ..provide understanding. Drive the head knowledge into the heart knowledge. Imagine a man who has been told to diet and keep of high cholesterol foods all the time and he has head knowledge he knows it must be done but he does not do it. The knowledge remains head knowledge. One day after a heart attack the reality of that truth becomes sharply real in his life due to his near death experience and finally his behavior changes there is transformation. The information has percolated from the head to the heart via the experience of the heart attack. The Holy Spirit's job is to make Gods word real in the heart of the believer in the same way.

**4. Look at John 16:13-14 and discuss what the role of the HS is in the lives of Christians. Do you have this in your lives ...please share with each other**

The job of the Holy Spirit is to make Jesus real in our lives. That the more and more we realize how beautiful and glorious and important He is to us so that He will take up greater and greater portions of our lives. We find Him so wonderful that we willingly and excitingly seek Him.

## **Meditation**

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(Romans 8:5-6 ESV)

What wrong attitudes do I need to repent of

What is it in these verses that bring comfort.

What is it in these verses that build me up

Meditate on these for the next week and come back to share with each other how God has spoken to you through the Holy Spirit.