

Of Spiritual Mindedness.

by John Gill

Spiritual mindedness is being regenerated, renewed, and quickened by the Spirit of God, and having a disposition to spiritual things.

Scripture: Romans 8:5

Topics: "Spiritual Mindedness", "Transformation by the Holy Spirit"

Description

John Gill emphasizes the stark contrast between carnal and spiritual mindedness, illustrating how those who are spiritually minded are regenerated by the Spirit of God and seek after spiritual things, while carnal individuals are consumed by fleshly desires leading to death. He explains that true spiritual men are characterized by their discernment of good and evil, their love for God's law, and their engagement in spiritual acts and services. Gill highlights that spiritual mindedness results in life and peace, as it reflects a genuine relationship with God and a desire for eternal blessings. Ultimately, he asserts that spiritual mindedness is not innate but requires a transformative work of the Holy Spirit in one's life.

Transcript

A Body of PRACTICAL Divinity

Book 1--Chapter 22

OF SPIRITUAL MINDEDNESS

The contrast between a carnal man and a spiritual man, and between carnal mindedness and spiritual mindedness, is very strongly expressed by the apostle in Romans 8:5, 6. "They that are after the flesh," carnal men, sinful, and corrupt, who are as they were born, having nothing but flesh, sin, and corruption in them, without the Spirit, and his grace, who walk after the flesh, and fulfil the desires of it; these "mind the things of the flesh," their minds are "fleshly minds," they seek nothing but the gratification of the lusts of the flesh, and employ themselves in doing the works of it, which are called, The sins of the flesh, the consequence of which is death; "For to be carnally minded is death," eternal death, the just wages of sin; as it must needs be, since such carnality is sin and sinful, and enmity against God, as in the following verse: now the spiritual man, and spiritual mindedness, and the consequence of that, are the reverse of all this.

As will appear by considering, 1. Who are the men who mind spiritual things, and are spiritual men. They are described as "they that are after the Spirit." Not all that think they are spiritual men, and would be thought such, are so; "If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual," as a man may, and yet be neither; and therefore every spirit, or everyone that professes himself to have the Spirit, and to be a spiritual man, is not to be believed; but "the spirits," or such who call themselves spiritual men, are to be "tried" by the word of God, whether they are such or not; they may seem so to others, and yet not be such; and if only outwardly righteous, or externally reformed in their lives, they may be at most but moral men, not spiritual men; yea, men may have a "form of godliness," a show of spirituality, yet not have the truth and power of it; they may look like virgins, and appear as spiritually wise, and yet be foolish.

Nor are all truly spiritual men, who have "spiritual gifts," as they may be called, distinct from special grace; for the apostle, after having discoursed of spiritual gifts, speaks of a "more excellent way;" and observes, that men may have various gifts, extraordinary and ordinary, and yet be destitute of true grace (1 Cor. 12:1,31; 13:1-3). Nor are such only intended who have a greater degree of spiritual knowledge, and of real grace than others; for though these are most certainly spiritual men, and of the highest class (1 Cor. 3:1; Gal. 6:1) yet they are not the only ones; others, who have less knowledge, and a lesser degree of grace, are also entitled to this character.

Much less such are meant who have no flesh or sin in them; for there are no such spiritual men on earth; none but the saints in heaven, the spirits of just men made perfect; and who, at the resurrection, will have spiritual bodies. But, 1a. They are such who are regenerated, renewed, and quickened by the Spirit of God; they are such as our Lord describes, as "born of water and of the Spirit," or of the Spirit of God compared to water; and who and whatsoever is so born, is spirit, or spiritual (John 3:5,6), such are born of God, and made partakers of the divine nature; "not of blood," by carnal generation and descent, "not of corruptible, but of incorruptible seed;" begotten again of God to a lively hope of a glorious inheritance, according to his abundant mercy, and of his own sovereign will and pleasure; and are a "kind of first fruits of his creatures;" yea, they are new creatures; for the grace bestowed on them is, "the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost;" they are renewed in the spirit of their minds, and have new hearts and new spirits given them, and the Spirit of God put into them, by whom they are quickened, who before were dead in trespasses and sins; but now the Spirit of life from God enters into them; and like the slain witnesses, and Ezekiel's dry bones, stand on their feet and live: and being thus made alive, they breathe in a spiritual manner, after salvation, and the way of it, and the knowledge of it; and after Christ, when directed to him; after God, and communion with him; after a discovery and application of pardoning grace and mercy: all which, and more things of a spiritual nature, they vehemently desire, with their whole souls and spirits; and may be truly said to be spiritually minded. 1b.

They are such who have their spiritual senses, and that in exercise, to discern both good and evil, to choose and mind the one, and to refuse and shun the other; they have a spiritual "sight," a discerning of things, even of spiritual things, which are only "spiritually discerned;" and which spiritual discernment the natural man has not; but the spiritual man has, and can make a judgment of them; try things that differ, approve the more excellent, and prefer them; they have the seeing eye given them, the eyes of their understandings are enlightened by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of themselves and of Christ: this one thing they can say, "whereas they were blind, they now see;" see themselves lost and undone, and Jesus as their only Saviour; and they behold his glory, fulness, excellency, and suitableness as a Saviour: they now hear the gospel with pleasure; it is a "joyful sound" to them, good news and glad tidings of peace, pardon, righteousness, eternal life, and salvation by Christ; they hear the

voice of Christ, and are charmed with it, and their affections are drawn out to him; they hear it so as to understand it, and be delighted with it, and to distinguish it from the voice of a stranger, and therefore follow him, and not a stranger: they "taste," and have a gust for spiritual things; they taste that the Lord is gracious, and invite others to come and taste, and see how good he is; the words of Christ, the doctrines of the gospel, are sweeter to their "taste" than the honey or honeycomb; the fruits that drop from Christ, while sitting under his shadow, the blessings of grace, which are from him, are also sweet and pleasant to their palate: they "savour" the things which be of God and Christ, and which are of a spiritual nature; because of the "savour of his good ointment," his rich graces, their love is drawn forth to him; they "smell a sweet savour" in his person, righteousness, and sacrifice; all his garments, his garment of salvation and robe of righteousness smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia: they "handle" the word of life, lay hold on Christ, the tree of life, and pluck, and take, and eat of the fruit that grows upon it; and when they have lost sight of Christ, their beloved, and have found him again, they embrace him in their arms, hold him fast, and will not let him go.

The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto them; they receive it cordially, and the love of it, and feel it powerfully working in them, and find themselves strongly influenced by it to love and serve him. 1c. They are capable of spiritual acts and exercises, and do perform them; spiritual men, and they only, "worship God in the Spirit," in a spiritual manner, with their spirits, and under the influence of his Spirit; and such worship, as it becomes their character, is only acceptable to God; when the worship of carnal and formal professors is very disagreeable to him: they can talk and converse with each other about spiritual things; the Lord turns unto them, or bestows upon them a pure language, the language of Canaan, which they speak, and in which they speak one to another, so as to understand and be understood by each other; as they are favored with abundance of rich inward experience, out of the abundance of their hearts their mouths speak, in Christian conference with one another; and their speech in common conversation betrays them, and shows to what company they belong, and that they are not carnal, but spiritual men: and they are capable of walking, and they do walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; which distinguishes them from carnal men, and entitles them to the character of spiritual men; yea, they walk in the Spirit, and live in the Spirit, and are led by him, out and off of themselves, to Christ, and the fulness of grace in him, and into all truth as it is in Jesus; and such who are under his leadings and teachings, as they are the sons of God, they must be spiritual men, and mind spiritual things. 1d.

They have much of the Spirit of God in them, the several graces of the Spirit of God; as faith, hope, love, and all other fruits of the Spirit. The good work of grace, of which he is the author, the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope, is begun in them by him, and will be carried on, performed and perfected; he works in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure, and whatsoever is well pleasing in the sight of God, and strengthens them to do the will and work of God; under his influence they exercise every grace, and grace is the governing principle in their souls; they are not under the law, but under grace, and therefore sin has not the dominion over them; but grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord; yea, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ, frees them from the law of sin and death, from the tyrannical power of it; so that they appear to be spiritual men, and to be spiritually alive.

And even the Spirit of God himself dwells in them, and is the criterion which distinguishes them from carnal men; "Ye are not in the flesh," that is, ye are not carnal men; "but in the Spirit," spiritual men, "if so be that the spirit of God dwell in you;" and therefore called the temple of God and of the Holy Ghost; the world, carnal men cannot receive him, nor know him; but the true disciples of Christ know him; for he

dwells with them, and shall be in them (Rom. 8:9; John 14:17), though even in these spiritual men there is much carnal mindedness, carnal affections, and lusts, and desires; "The flesh lusteth against the spirit;" and they are ready to say, with the apostle, "I am carnal; with the flesh I serve the law of sin" (Rom. 7:14,24,25). 2.

What the spiritual things are, spiritual men mind; from which they are denominated spiritually minded men. 2a. They mind their own souls, and the spiritual and eternal welfare of them; not only when they were first awakened to a sense of their sinful state and danger, and cried out, What shall we do to be saved? and when they first asked the way to Zion, with their faces thitherwards, and first gave up themselves to the Lord, and to a church of Christ, by the will of God; but afterwards, by making use of all opportunities, public and private, for their profit and edification, to promote the prosperity of their souls, which spiritual men are more mindful of than of their bodies. 2b.

The law of God is spiritual (Rom. 7:14), and this is minded by a spiritual man. This has great things in it worthy of consideration, and to be minded, respecting the good of men and the glory of God; and yet many are unmindful of it, yea, cast it away and despise it, "and count it as a strange thing" (Hosea 8:12), unworthy of any notice and regard; but the spiritual man, whose eyes are spiritually enlightened, and the vail taken off from them, beholds "wondrous things" out of it, especially as in the hand of Christ, and fulfilled by him; and they may be said to mind it, and to be spiritually minded towards it, when they meditate upon it, the author, nature, and usefulness of it.

It is the character of a good and happy man, that "in his law" (the law of God) "doth he meditate day and night;" not in it as a terrifying, cursing, and condemning law; but as instructing, and informing into the nature of sin and duty, and as magnified and made honorable by Christ, who has fulfilled both the preceptive and penal part of it; and of which David says, "O how love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day!" (Ps. 1:2; 119:97), yea, spiritual men not only love it, "and great peace have they which love thy law;" but they delight in it, as did that spiritual man the apostle Paul; "I delight in the law of God after the inner man;" see (Ps. 1:2; Rom. 7:22), and they are willingly subject to it, and serve it with pleasure.

The "carnal mind," fronthma thV sarkoV, "the wisdom, of the flesh;" or the man who is under the influence of it, and is carnally minded, is "enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;" but the wisdom of the Spirit, or he who is under the influence of that, and is spiritually minded, is subject to it, and with his mind serves the law of God. 2c. The gospel, and the truths of it, which are spiritual things; "If," says the apostle, "we have sown unto you spiritual things," the seed of the word, and the precious truths of the gospel, "is it a great thing, if we should reap your carnal things?" partake of somewhat of your worldly substance (1 Cor. 9:11), these are the things of the Spirit of God, or the spiritual things which the natural man receives not, because foolishness to him; as the doctrine of the cross, or the doctrine of salvation by a crucified Christ is; nor does he know it, value and esteem it, it being only spiritually discerned; which spiritual discernment he has not; but the spiritual man judges spiritual truths, and discerns the difference of them from others, and the true value of them; his taste discerns perverse things, and distinguishes good and bad; and he esteems the word of truth more than his necessary food, and counts them savory food, such as his soul loves; he finds the word of salvation by Christ, and he eats it, and it is the joy and rejoicing of his heart; it is like Ezekiel's roll, which was in his mouth "as honey for sweetness;" it is "the sincere milk of the word" which newborn babes desire; and is meat for strong men, to which spiritual men have their minds well inclined: and on divine and evangelical truths they dwell in their thoughts and meditations; as on the doctrines of everlasting love, of the covenant of grace, and the transactions of it; "We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple!" and on the

doctrines relating to the person, offices, grace, and righteousness of Christ; to which may be applied the words of the Psalmist, "My meditation him shall be sweet!" (Ps. 48:9; 104:34). 2d.

Spiritual blessings are minded by spiritual men; such as the elect of God are blessed with in heavenly places in Christ (Eph 1:3), as election in Christ, acceptance with God in him, redemption, pardon, justification, adoption, and eternal life; these are things spiritually minded men have their hearts set upon, and are often revolving in their minds; these are blessings indeed, which they are importunately desirous of; they seek first the "kingdom of God and righteousness," and such like spiritual and heavenly things; believing, that all other things of a worldly kind shall be given unto them, needful for them, about which they are not anxiously solicitous, not minding them in comparison of others. 2e.

Being built up a "spiritual" house, and being a holy spiritual priesthood; they are concerned to offer up "spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ," even the sacrifices of prayer and praise, which they offer up by their great High priest, and which become sweet odors, being perfumed with the incense of his mediation; and they themselves are made joyful in the house of prayer, their offerings being accepted with God upon his altar; which draw their spiritual minds hither, and make them intent upon such sacrifices. 2f.

Spiritually minded men employ themselves in spiritual services; they present their bodies a holy, living, and acceptable sacrifice, which is but their reasonable service; and concerned they are to serve the Lord in every religious duty acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, and in righteousness and holiness all the days of their lives. Moreover, 2g. They exercise themselves in each of the graces of the Spirit of God; their minds are very intent upon, and very desirous of a growth in every grace, that their faith may be increased and grow exceedingly; that they may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost; and that their love also might abound yet more and more.

To all which may be added, 2h. That spiritually minded men have their hearts, affections, and conversations in heaven; their hearts are where their treasure is, and that is in heaven; their affections are set on things above, where Jesus is; and their conversation is in heaven, from whence they expect Jesus their Saviour. 3. It may next be inquired, how any of the sons of men come to be spiritual men, and to be spiritually minded. They are not so naturally, or by their first birth; they are born of the flesh, and are flesh, carnal, sinful, and corrupt; their "minds are fleshly," or they are carnally minded; their minds and consciences are defiled with sin, and from thence nothing proceeds but what is sinful; their minds are vain and empty, and they walk in the vanity of their minds; they are without God, any true knowledge of him, love to him, and fear of him; they have not learned Christ, and think nothing about him; they are sensual, not having the Spirit, nor any of his graces: they mind earth, and earthly things, these engross all their thoughts, affections, and desires; all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, are the principal entertainments of their minds, and what they are chiefly conversant with; their natural bias is to that which is evil; the imagination of the thought of their heart is evil, and that continually yea, their hearts are fully set in them to do evil; and such is the disposition of their minds, that they cannot think anything of themselves, especially that which is spiritually good.

This being then the case of the minds of men naturally, there must be a renewing of the mind, or it must be cast into a different mould: ere a man can be spiritually minded, he must have a new heart and a new spirit put within him; the Spirit of God must "work" in him "to will," must give him an inclination and disposition to that which is spiritually good; he must enlighten his mind, and fill it with the knowledge of spiritual things; must put the laws of God into the minds of men, and write them in their hearts; he must influence and

attract their affections to spiritual things, and make them in love with them, and thoroughly convince them of the evil of carnal mindedness, and the sad effect of it, death; and of the advantages of spiritual mindedness, next to be considered. 4.

The effects and consequences, and so the evidence of being spiritually minded. 4a. First, life: "To be spiritually minded is life:" they must be alive who are spiritually minded, and they must be alive in a spiritual sense; their spiritual mindedness is an evidence of their spiritual life, and makes it plainly appear that they are in such sense alive. This is manifest, 4a1. From the exercise of their senses, before observed; they have their spiritual senses of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and feeling; and therefore must have life, without which there can be no senses, and the exercise of them; as he who has his natural senses must be naturally alive, so he that has his spiritual senses must be spiritually alive. 4a2.

From acts of spiritual life performed by them; they breathe after spiritual things; prayer is the breath of every spiritually minded man; "Behold, he prays!" and this shows life; he discourses of spiritual things, which discovers the temper and disposition of his mind; his walk and conversation is spiritual, he walks and lives by faith on Christ, and walks on in him as he has received him. 4a3. From the lively exercise of grace in him, and fervent discharge of duty. His faith is a living; and not a dead faith; his hope is lively, and his love is as strong as death, and cannot be destroyed by it: all which evidence his spiritual life; and the exercise of these graces evidences his spiritual mindedness; and hence follow a fervency of spirit in serving the Lord, and a running in his ways without weariness, and a walking without fainting. 4a4.

Such who are spiritually minded are not only alive themselves, but they are the means of enlivening others by their spiritual conversation; by their spiritual counsel and advice: by their spiritual consolation they administer, and by their spiritual exhortations stirring up to love and good works. 4a5. Spiritual mindedness issues in everlasting life; which is the gift of God, and flows from his grace; which all that are spiritually minded partake of, and shall have it; this is certain from the promise, that whosoever seeth the Son, and believes in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life; and from the grace of God in them, which is a well of living water springing up unto everlasting life; and from the Spirit of God in them, the earnest of it, and who makes meet for eternal life, and introduces into it, because of the righteousness of Christ, which entitles to it. 4b.

Secondly, another effect and consequent of spiritual mindedness is peace; "To be spiritually minded is peace;" inward peace of soul, which is a fruit of the Spirit, and is had in a way of believing in Christ; it flows from the righteousness of Christ received by faith, and from his peace speaking blood in the conscience; and the spiritual things their minds are conversant with, are productive of internal peace, and serve to maintain and increase it. Spiritually minded persons are of peaceable dispositions; they are desirous to "lead a quiet and peaceable life," under whatsoever government they be; and "as much as lieth in them," they endeavour to "live peaceably with all men," in the neighborhoods in which they are; to promote peace in their families, and among their friends; and "study to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," among the saints in a church state, in which they, are; to do otherwise would be to act the carnal part, and walk as men (1 Cor. 3:3). And to close all, spiritual mindedness issues in everlasting peace, the end of such a man is peace, he departs in peace, he enters into it; and this is his everlasting portion and happiness.

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