

## The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded<sup>1</sup>: Author's Preface

**OCCASION:** "...the thoughts here communicated were originally **private meditations** for my own use, in a **season** wherein I was every way **unable to do anything** for the edification of others, and **far** from expectation that **ever** I should be so able any more **in this world**. Receiving, as I thought, some benefit and satisfaction in the exercise of my own meditations therein, when God was graciously pleased to restore a little strength unto me, I insisted on the same subject in the **instruction of a private congregation.**" (vii)

**RELEVANCE:** "And the first thing which I would observe unto this end is, the present importunity of **the world** to **impose itself** on the minds of men, and the various ways of insinuation whereby it **possesseth** and **filleteth** them." (viii)

- "And, first, the **present state of all public affairs** in [the world], with an apprehended concernment of private persons therein, **continually exerciseth the thoughts of many**, and is almost **the only subject of their mutual converse**; for the world is at present in a **mighty hurry**, and being in many places cast off from all foundations of steadfastness, it makes the minds of men **giddy with its revolutions**, or **disorderly** in the **expectations** of them." (ix)
- "Thoughts about these things are both **allowable and unavoidable**, if they take **not** the mind out of its own power by their **multiplicity, vehemency, and urgency**, until it be **unframed as unto spiritual things**, retaining **neither room nor time** for their entertainment. **Hence men walk and talk as if the world were all, when comparatively it is nothing.** And when men come with their warmed affections, **reeking with thoughts of these things**, unto the performance of or attendance unto any **spiritual duty**, it is very **difficult** for them, if not **impossible**, to stir up any grace unto a due and vigorous exercise." (ix)
- "Again; there are so great and pregnant evidences of **the prevalence of an earthly, worldly frame of spirit in many who make profession of religion**, that it is high time they were called unto a due consideration how unanswerable they are therein unto the power and spirituality of that religion which they do profess." (x)
- "In their **habits, attires, and vestments**, in their usual **converse** and misspense of **time**, in their over-liberal **entertainment** of themselves and others, unto the borders of **excess**, and sundry other things of a like nature, there is in many such a **conformity unto the world** (a thing severely forbidden) that it is **hard to make a distinction between them.** And these things do manifest such a **predominancy of carnal affections** in the minds of men as, whatever may be pretended unto the contrary, is inconsistent with spiritual peace." (x)

**URGENCY / NECESSITY:** "In the pursuit of this corrupt affection [for the things of this world] **do many professors of religion grow withering, useless, sapless, giving no evidence that the love of God abideth in them.** On these and many other accounts do many Christians evidence themselves to be **strangers from spiritual mindedness**, from a life of **meditation** and holy **contemplation** on things above; yet **unless** we are found in these things in some good measure, **no grace will thrive or flourish in us, no duty will be rightly performed by us, no condition sanctified or improved, nor are we prepared in a due manner, or "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."** (xi)

### CHAPTER ONE: The Words of the Text Explained

*"To be spiritually minded is life and peace." (Rom. 8:6)*

**FLESH & SPIRIT = TWO STATES OF MANKIND (Mutually Exclusive):** "The opposite subjects are, the 'minding of the flesh' and the 'minding of the Spirit,' or the being 'carnally minded' and 'spiritually minded.' And these two do constitute **two states of mankind, unto the one of which every individual person in the world doth belong**; and it is of the highest concernment unto the souls of men to know whether of them they appertain unto." (14)

- "Unto **one** of these doth every living man belong; he is under the ruling conduct of the flesh or of the Spirit; **there is no middle state, though there are different degrees in each of these as to good and evil.**" (14)

**FLESH & SPIRIT = TWO QUALITIES WITHIN THE SOUL (Mixed in Believers):** "As unto the **qualities** expressed by 'the flesh' and 'the Spirit,' there may be a **mixture** of them in the same persons at the same time, — there is so in **all that are regenerate**; for in them 'the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary,' Galatians 5:17. Thus different, contrary actings in the same subject constitute **not distinct states**; but where either of them is **predominant** or hath a **prevalent rule** in the soul, there it makes a **different state.**" (14)

**THE TERM 'DEATH':** "'To be carnally minded is,' as the apostle speaks, 'death,' it is so every way; and they who are so are dead in trespasses and sins... that is, under the power of **death spiritual**, and obnoxious unto **death eternal.**" (21-22)

**THE TERM 'SPIRIT' OR 'SPIRITUAL':** "The 'Spirit' in this context is evidently used in a double sense, as is usual where **both the Holy Spirit himself and his work on the souls of men** are related unto." (16)

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<sup>1</sup> John Owen, *The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977)

**THE TERM 'MIND':** “[It] is the principal power and act of the mind. It is its **light, wisdom, prudence, knowledge, understanding, and discretion**. It is not so with respect unto speculation or ratiocination merely... [but] is **practical**, including the habitual frame and inclination of the **affections** also. It is [the mind’s] faculty to **conceive** of things with a **delight** in them and **adherence** unto them, from that suitability which it finds in them unto all its affections. (16-17)

**THE TERM 'SPIRITUAL MINDEDNESS':** “Wherefore, the ‘minding of the Spirit’ is **the actual exercise of the mind as renewed by the Holy Ghost, as furnished with a principle of spiritual life and light, in its conception of spiritual things and the setting of its affections on them, as finding that relish and savor in them wherewith it is pleased and satisfied... that is, to have the mind changed and renewed by a principle of spiritual life and light, so as to be continually acted and influenced thereby unto thoughts and meditations of spiritual things, from the affections cleaving unto them with delight and satisfaction.**” (17-18)

1. “The actual exercise of the mind, in its thoughts, meditations, and desires, about things spiritual and heavenly.” (18)
2. “The inclination, disposition, and frame of the mind, in all its affections, whereby it adheres and cleaves unto spiritual things.” (18)
3. “A complacency of mind, from that gust, relish, and savor, which it finds in spiritual things, from their suitability unto its constitution, inclinations, and desires.” (18)

**DOCTRINAL MEANING & IMPLICATIONS OF THE TEXT (ROMANS 8:6):**

1. “To be spiritually minded is the **great distinguishing character of true believers** from all unregenerate persons.” (19)
2. “Where any are spiritually minded, **there, and there alone**, is life and peace.” (20)

**EARTHLY MINDEDNESS IN THE UNCONVERTED:** “When there is in any a **love of earthly things** that is **predominant**, whence a person may be rightly denominated to be earthly minded, **he is not, nor can be, spiritually minded at all**; he hath **no interest** in the frame of heart and spirit intended thereby. And thus it is evidently with the **greatest part of them who are called Christians in the world**, let them pretend what they will to the contrary.” (22)

**EARTHLY MINDEDNESS IN NEGLIGENT BELIEVERS:** “Again; there is a being earthly minded which consists in an inordinate affection; affection unto the things of this world. **It is that which is sinful, which ought to be mortified; yet it is not absolutely inconsistent with the substance and being of the grace inquired after. Some who are really and truly spiritually minded, yet may, for a time at least, be under such an inordinate affection unto and care about earthly things, that if not absolutely, yet comparatively, as unto what they ought to be and might be, they may be justly said to be earthly minded.** They are so in respect of those **degrees** in being spiritually minded which they ought to aim at and may attain unto. And where it is thus, **this grace can never thrive or flourish**, it can **never advance unto any eminent degree**. This is the Zoar of many professors, — that “little one” wherein they would be spared. Such an earthly mindedness as is **wholly inconsistent with being spiritually minded**, as unto the state and condition which depends thereon, **they would avoid; for this they know would be absolutely exclusive of life and peace.** They cannot but know that such a frame is **as inconsistent with salvation as living in the vilest sin that any man can contract the guilt of...** But there is a **degree** in being earthly minded which they suppose their interest, advantages, relations, and occasions of life do call for, which they would be a little **indulged** in; they may **abide** in such a frame **without a disparagement of their profession**. And the truth is, **they have too many companions to fear** an especial reflection on themselves. The **multitude of the guilty take away the sense and shame of the guilt**. But, besides, they hope well that it is **not inconsistent absolutely** with being spiritually minded; only they cannot well deny but that it is contrary unto such degrees in that grace, such **thriving** in that duty, as is **recommended** unto them. They think well of **others** who are spiritually minded in an **eminent** degree, at least they do so as unto the thing itself **in general**; for when they come unto **particular instances** of this or that man, for the most part they **esteem what is beyond their own measure to be little better than pretense**. But, in general, to be spiritually minded in an eminent degree, they cannot but esteem it a thing excellent and desirable; — **but it is for them who are more at leisure than they are; their circumstances and occasions require them to satisfy themselves with an inferior measure.**” (22-24)

**WILLFUL COMPLACENCY AS A MARK OF SELF-DECEPTION:** “Whoever he be who doth **not sincerely aim at the highest degree** of being spiritually minded which the means he enjoyeth would lead him unto, and which the light he hath received doth call for, — **whoever judgeth it necessary** unto his present advantages, occasions, and circumstances, **to rest** in such measures or degrees of it as he **cannot but know come short of what he ought to aim at**, and so doth **not** endeavor after completeness in the will of God herein, — can have **no** satisfaction in his own mind, hath **no** unfailing grounds whereon to believe that he hath **anything at all** of the reality of this grace in him. Such a person **possibly may have life**, which accompanies the essence of this grace, **but he cannot have peace**, which follows on its degree in a due improvement. And it is to be feared that [by] far the **greatest number** of them who satisfy themselves in this apprehension, willingly **neglecting an endeavor after the farther degrees of this grace and growth in this duty**, which their light or convictions, and the means they enjoy, do suggest unto them, **are indeed carnally minded and every way obnoxious unto death.**” (24)