

***LIFE IN THE SPIRIT, PT. 2***  
***ROMANS 8:9-11***

A couple of years ago a Great Dane was brought into the DoveLewis Emergency Animal Hospital in Portland, Oregon because the dog had been retching and vomiting all through the day. The doctors examined the dog with abdominal radiographs and found “a severely distended stomach and a large quantity of foreign material.” During a surgery that soon followed, the veterinarians discovered a sock in the dog’s belly. And then another one. And another one. In fact, in total they extracted 43-1/2 socks from the dog’s belly.



*Some of the recovered socks.*

Apparently the dog was working in concert with the washing machine to abscond with the socks.

Of course this begs the question, “On how much footwear can Fido feast before Fido’s found a fatality?”

More seriously, it is worth noting that what one consumes can kill. For humanity, what is lurking inside of us — our fleshly desires and longings that are the manifestation of our sinful Adamic nature — is deadly. It can and will kill us — unless something changes.

And by the grace and glory of God, something has changed. The Holy Spirit has set us free from the law of sin and death through the work of Jesus Christ (**Rom. 8:2**). Previously, we only knew bondage to sin. Now we know freedom from sin. Before we only knew the power of the flesh, but now we know the power of God working in us. In fact, Paul reminds us in **vv. 5-8** of Romans 8 of what changed when we were moved from darkness to light and from flesh to Spirit — we were given a new mindset, a new position, a new ability, and a new desire. It is not trite to say that the transformation could not have been more radical.

Now in verses 9-11, Paul begins to unpack how that transformation has taken place — it was through the gift of the Holy Spirit who came to indwell believers. Again, the theme of this section is —

***WHEN THE SPIRIT OF GOD SAVES SOMEONE, HE IS ENTIRELY CHANGED — FROM THE INSIDE OUT.***

In these verses, Paul reveals four realities about the life of the Spirit in the believer —

- 1. If You are in Christ, You are NOT in the Flesh (v. 9a)**
- 2. If You are in Christ, the SPIRIT is in You (v. 9b)**
- 3. If the Spirit is in You, You ARE Being Made Alive (v. 10)**
- 4. If the Spirit is in You, You WILL be Made Alive (v. 11)**

### 1. If You are in Christ, You are **NOT** in the Flesh (v. 9a)

- In verses 5-8, Paul reminded the readers and us about the power of the flesh. And then he transitions in verse 9 — **however**. The believer's state is different than the unbeliever who is still in the flesh.
- And Paul is even emphatic when he says **You are not in the flesh**. The pronoun is emphatic — "You... you are not..." It is a recognition that the basic direction of their lives has changed and they are no longer those who are hostile to God and displeasing to God. That is not their nature or identity. Their lives have given testimony to the transformation that has taken place and it is evident to Paul and others that God has interjected Himself into their lives and changed them.
- Paul also uses the present tense verb with the negative to indicate that they are not and will not ever be again in the flesh. They have permanently been removed from the context of the flesh.
  - ✓ It is Paul's affirmation that once they are in the Spirit it is impossible to be in the flesh again.
  - ✓ They are not "sold under sin" (7:4) anymore. That has changed. The flesh no longer determines the direction of their lives.
- All these have combined to make a profound transformation and change.
- When I was in seminary, Raye Jeanne and I lived in campus housing across the street from the main academic buildings. One day in early May, 1989, I walked out of that building and across the street to our apartment and with amazement said to myself, "I will never take another exam again. I'm finished with school. It's done and over..." Now I have had to work and I have been tested in many ways since then, but I have never again taken another exam for an educational institution for an academic degree. And I certainly never took another exam for that school or that degree.
  - ✓ My fundamental status had changed. I was no longer under the authority of that administration. (And you better believe I cheered!)
  - ✓ The same is true for a believer in Christ. Our relationship to sin and the flesh has changed. Sin is not our master and the flesh is not our authority. If you are in Christ, you are not in the flesh.
  - ✓ So Ray Ortland, Jr. has written —

"All that Paul has said about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in verses 1-8 is yours. You can personalize the gospel for yourself. You can say, 'The Holy Spirit not only lives in Christians, he lives in this Christian.'" [Ortland, *Supernatural Living for Natural People*.]

- There is a second reality about the Spirit's work in the believer, given in v. 9 —

## 2. If You are in Christ, the SPIRIT is in You (v. 9b)

- **But in the Spirit** is a strong contrast — stronger than **however** at the beginning of the verse. It means, “not this *but* that...” Paul is working hard to help us grasp the magnitude of the change salvation brought.
- Then Paul says **[you are] in the Spirit — if...** And there might be a temptation to think, “Well I hope I am and I hope I don’t lose the Spirit...” But that’s not what Paul means. This is what is called a conditional sentence (“if...then”) but the form Paul uses is not, “If, and it might not be...” but he uses a structure and word that means, “Since...and He certainly does dwell in you...”
- Paul also uses the present tense, **dwells in you**. That is a present tense that indicates He is perpetually and permanently living in the believer. So one commentator rightly says, “The Spirit is not an occasional visitor; he takes up residence in God’s people.” [Morris] This is His permanent home.
- And notice the contrast — the believer is not *in the flesh*, but **in the Spirit** (identified with Him) and the Spirit is *in the believer*. We cannot be in the flesh because of what is in us. Our controlling and ruling power has changed. Someone has said, “indwelling sin marks the unbeliever...the indwelling Spirit marks the believer.” That does not mean that the believer never sins (7:14-25 made that clear, as does Gal. 5 and others). But it does mean that our relationship to sin has changed:

“However much we may need to grow in our relationship to the Spirit; however much we may be graciously given fresh and invigorating experiences of God’s Spirit, from the moment of conversion on, the Holy Spirit is a settled resident within.” [Moo]

- Paul is talking here about what is called “the indwelling of the Spirit” by theologians. **What does it mean to be indwelt by the Spirit?**
  - ✓ Paul is not fundamentally talking about a spatial relationship — “inside” us. Remember, the Holy Spirit is a spirit — in fact, no member of the Godhead has a physical body or form (prior to Christ’s incarnation), so to say the Spirit is “in” us does not mean that we are talking about a location.
  - ✓ In fact in the next verse Paul will say, **Christ is in you**, and he does not mean that Christ physically inhabits part of our bodies. And many times he says the believer is **in Christ** (6:3, 11; 8:1; 12:5). He does not mean that we are physically part of Jesus Christ’s body. He is talking about relationship and identification.
  - ✓ It also helps to note that the preposition translated “in” can also be translated “with” or “by.” To use the word “with” helps us understand that Paul is not talking about location — where He is — but presence and power — how He relates to us. He is talking about authority and control.
- **What are the marks of the indwelling of the Spirit?** (How do we know we are indwelt?)
  - ✓ **Jn. 14:16** — He is given as a promise of Christ; He took the place of Christ to be with us
  - ✓ **Eph. 1:13** — He is given at the time of salvation (also, Gal. 3:2; 2 Tim. 1:14)
  - ✓ **1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19** — He is given to all believers — even as a corporate identity (not just individually)
  - ✓ **Eph. 4:30** — He is given as a promise of the future
  - ✓ **John 14:16** — He is given, never to be taken away (also, Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 2:12; contrast Ps. 51:11)

- What does the Spirit do when He indwells us?

- ✓ He regenerates us (Tt. 3:5; Jn. 3:5); He makes us come to life
- ✓ He sanctifies us (Rom. 8:4, 15-16; 1 Cor. 6:11; 1 Pt. 1:2)
- ✓ He produces His fruit in us (Gal. 5:22-24)
- ✓ He convicts regarding sin and judgment (Jn. 16:8-11)
- ✓ He fills us and guides us through His Word (Eph. 5:18-19; Col. 3:16)
- ✓ He produces His gifts in us for the benefit of the church (Rom. 12:3ff)
- ✓ He points us to Christ (1 Jn. 4:2-3; Jn. 14:26; 16:13-14) — the Spirit's role is not to exalt Himself, but to exalt Christ
- ✓ He gives us understanding of God and His Word (1 Cor. 2:14-15)
- ✓ He intercedes for us in our prayers (8:26-27)
- ✓ He is grieved when we sin (Eph. 4:30)
- ✓ The Spirit provides everything we need to live the Christian life. He is as resourceful and beneficial to us as if we had Christ walking beside us each moment of each day. Because He is "the Spirit of Christ," we can say that we actually do have Christ walking with us each moment of each day.
- ✓ So the importance of the Spirit's indwelling us is not the location of the Spirit, but the effect of the Spirit on us. John Stott has made the statement, "If we claim to be Christian, we must be like Christ." Yet there is a measure of futility to that statement. "How can I, who have sinned with regularity and still sin regularly, be like the One who is sinless?" The truth of the indwelling of the Spirit is the answer. The writer William Temple has said —

*"It's no good giving me a play like Hamlet or King Lear and telling me to write a play like that. Shakespeare could do it; I can't. And it is no good showing me a life like the life of Jesus and telling me to live a life like that.*

*Jesus could do it; I can't.*

*"But if the genius of Shakespeare could come and live in me, then I could write plays like his.*

*And if the Spirit of Jesus could come and live in me, then I could live a life like His."*

- ✓ This is why Jesus said it was to the advantage of His followers if He departed — so that He could send the Spirit of God to be with them always (Jn. 16:7).

- What does it mean to **not have the Spirit**?

- ✓ When Paul says "does not have" he is using it as a parallel idea to "dwell;" in other words, it is normal and necessary to have the Spirit to be a Christian. There is no salvation and no Christianity without possessing and being possessed by the Spirit of God.
- ✓ [ASIDE: Interestingly, notice that Paul calls Him the **Spirit of Christ** (9b). That is a strong allusion to the Trinity — the Father and Son and Spirit are joined together yet distinct and unique. They are interdependent and co-equal in power and authority, yet distinct in role.]

- ✓ Paul is unequivocal — if the Spirit is not in someone, then that one is not belonging to the Spirit.
- ✓ If there is no evidence of the power of the Spirit and no evidence of the Spirit's work, then that person can have no confidence that he is a Christian.

"Our whole existence used to be limited to the flesh – what we could achieve out of our own native moral capacities. All we had was our own good intentions. That is life in the flesh. It may be religious. It may be upright. It may be outwardly Christian. But it is rotten within, and it cannot last....

"Christians without the Holy Spirit do not exist, and all who do have the Spirit are Christians and stand to inherit all the renewal that God can impart to a rotted sinner." [Ortlund, Kindle 661-3.]

- ✓ So let me ask the natural question at this point — is there evidence of the Spirit in you? Are you the kind of person who is controlled by the flesh (self-indulgence or moralism)? Or are you controlled by the Spirit (submission to and pursuit of Christ by reliance on Him)? If you are living by the flesh, then there still is condemnation for you (v. 1). Your only hope (but it is a hope!) is to repent and trust Christ and His offering for sin (vv. 2-3). Will you believe and trust Him? You must.
- ✓ Paul's point in this verse is that if you are in Christ, the Spirit is in you. And since that is true, what a treasure we have with us, and working for us!

### 3. If the Spirit is in You, You ARE Being Made Alive (v. 10)

- In verse 9, Paul mentioned the Spirit of Christ indwelling the believer; now in verse 10 he says **Christ is in you...** Is there a difference between the indwelling Spirit and the indwelling Christ?
  - ✓ Paul wants us to see the close connection between the Son and Spirit. To have the Spirit of God in us and with us is to have Christ in us and with us — it is an affirmation of Jesus' promise to be with the disciples (Jn. 14:16-17; 16:7).
  - ✓ To have one member of the Trinity is to have the others; to be joined to Christ is to be joined to the Spirit and to be joined to the Spirit is to be joined to Christ.
  - ✓ It has been rightly said that the indwelling Spirit and the indwelling Christ are distinguishable, but they are inseparable. They are not the same beings (they are different persons in the Trinity), but they function cohesively and in unity in all they do.
  - ✓ For those of us who are lonely, this is such a tremendous encouragement. We may feel lonely, but we are never alone. We have not been left behind or forgotten. If we are in Christ, we are in Him and He and the Spirit are ever in us and with us.
- Now notice that even though the believer is indwelt by the Spirit and no longer controlled by the flesh, yet his **body is** still **dead**. By that Paul simply means that even if we have been saved, our physical bodies are still subject to the death introduced by Adam. If we are in Christ (5:12-21), our spirits will never die, but our bodies are still subject to the penalty of sin (6:23).

- But the death of the body is not the final part of the story. Paul encourages his readers by noting, ***yet the Spirit is life because of righteousness***.
  - ✓ The NASB translates it ***the spirit is alive...*** If you notice the lower-case “spirit,” the translators mean by that, “the spirit of the man is alive.” And that makes a fitting contrast to “body is dead,” which is what they want us to see and what I believed Paul was emphasizing.
  - ✓ However, the phrase actually doesn’t read, “the spirit is alive,” but “the spirit is life.” Now because of Christ, our spirits can be said to be alive, but they cannot be said to be “life.” They contain life, but they are not the source of life. And Paul seems to be pointing to the source — ***the Spirit is life***. We are dead, but He is not; He has all life in Him. And if He is in us, we have His life.
  - ✓ And Paul specifically says that the Spirit is life by or through ***righteousness*** — through Christ’s righteousness. Remember that Paul used a similar phrase in **5:18** — justification (applied by the Spirit) is the source of life for the believer.
  - ✓ So we might amplify this verse this way — “If you are believers, the risen Christ dwells within you. It is true, on the one hand, that your body is still subject to that temporal death which is the consequence of sin; but, on the other hand, the Spirit who has taken up his abode in you, the living and life-giving Spirit of Christ, imparts to you that eternal life which is the consequence of justification.” [F. F. Bruce]
  - ✓ So Paul’s point is that our bodies may be dying and have to go through death, but that does not mean we are dead; the Spirit who is alive has imparted the life of Christ to us so that we might live even now. It is another way of saying that we are free from the enslaving shackles of sin.
  - ✓ I read it again this week in Col. 3 — “Christ is our life,” and the Spirit is progressively making us alive in Him. The benefit is not just that we have a friend to comfort us as we go through life, but we have a Guide to direct us, an Intercessor to pray for us, and God to protect and keep us. He is not just *with* us, but He is with us to give us all we need in every circumstance, trial, and temptation.

#### 4. If the Spirit is in You, You **WILL** be Made Alive (v. 11)

- Sometimes we are given promises and we think, “No way! Who has the power to do that...?” And it might be tempting to think something similar about the Holy Spirit. How can He keep us from the power of the flesh? How can He make us alive?
  - ✓ He can make us alive because God has already done that through the Spirit’s work in the resurrection of Christ.
  - ✓ Now if you read Paul carefully, you notice that ***Him who raised Jesus from the dead*** was not the Spirit — it was the Father. Scripture regularly attests to the Father’s work in raising Christ (**Acts 5:30; Rom. 6:4; 10:9**; 1 Cor. 6:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; 1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Pt. 1:21).
  - ✓ But the resurrection was not just a work of the Father; as with so many other activities, it was a Triune act — so Jesus said that He had authority to raise Himself (Jn. 10:18), and here the Spirit is involved in the Father’s resurrection of the Son.

- ✓ The hope for the believer is that if the Father has power to raise the Son from the dead after the Son received infinite wrath, then we who were also under His infinite wrath and condemnation can similarly be raised by the eternal Spirit of God.
- The promise God gives is not just that the Spirit is making us alive now (v. 10), but that He *will* make us to live eternally through the power of the Spirit — ***He will also give life to your mortal bodies.***
  - ✓ If God has done the greater, giving life to Christ through the resurrection, He can do the lesser, giving life to our mortal bodies.
  - ✓ And notice that Paul is emphasizing that this life is being granted to our **bodies**. In v. 10, he says our bodies will die. But here he says that they will yet live. So the sentence of death brought on by sin is not the final word. The final word is the resurrection of Christ.
  - ✓ In 8:23 Paul says that we long for the culmination of our adoption and the redemption of our bodies; here he says that will indeed happen. It is as assured for us as Christ's resurrection has been accomplished. The only way our bodies will not be resurrected is if Christ would go back to the grave. And since Christ cannot die, then our bodies will be transformed (1 Cor. 15:42ff).
  - ✓ And of course if our bodies are renewed, then we will also be fully glorified; every vestige of sin removed from us (Rom. 8:29-30).
  - ✓ And all this is done ***through His Spirit who dwells in you.*** It is the work of the Spirit to bring us to Christ in salvation, make us alive — free from sin's bondage now, and make us finally and fully alive in eternity. The Spirit is superintending our spiritual life and progress from start to finish. We are guaranteed life not because of what we have done, but because of what the Spirit has done, is doing, and will do in applying the blood of Christ to us.

**CONCLUSION:** Michael Reeves reminds us that the first statement about the Holy Spirit in the Nicene Creed is that He is “the Lord, the giver of life.” And then Reeves comments, “In the beginning it was the Spirit who, like a mother dove, first vitalized creation and breathed life into it; likewise it is the Spirit who gives *new* life — first to Jesus in the tomb (Rom. 8:11), and then to us. Now just to have said that is to have said something profound: that we do not have life in ourselves. We depend entirely on the Spirit. And if that is how we were created to be, how much more is that true of us now [because of our sin in Adam]!”

All that we need for life, we have — when we trust Christ and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

**BENEDICTION:** Romans 8:37-39

**First Service** — Be sure to take advantage of the hospitality area. Find some physical refreshment and even more look for an opportunity to give spiritual refreshment: get to know someone you don't know; give a word of encouragement to someone who needs help and hope; pray with anyone who has a need.

**Second Service** — If you have children in the nursery or children's church, please serve our workers in those areas by picking them up immediately after we are dismissed.