

I. The Role of the Holy Spirit

A. Romans 8:5-11 . . . For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. [6] For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, [7] because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, [8] and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. [9] However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. [10] If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. [11] But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

B. Prayer

II. The necessity of the Holy Spirit for victory over the flesh

A. In Romans 8:5-8, Paul's primary message is that without divine assistance and empowerment, we will not live a godly life because we will not be able to live a godly life – in spite of whatever good intentions we might have – as Paul explained in Romans 7:14-25. Today, we are going to look at Paul's explanation of who is in the flesh – and therefore living according to the flesh, and who is in the Spirit – and therefore living according to the Spirit. And along with this explanation, Paul will show us the outcome of living according to the flesh and the outcome of living according to the Spirit.

B. Romans 8:9 . . . However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

1. In other words, if the Holy Spirit dwells within, you are living according to the Spirit. If you do not have the Holy Spirit living within, the best you can do is to live according to the flesh.
2. And though this truth is simple enough to understand, I want to give you some examples, which I will take from Romans 6,7 & 8,

- a. We can rightly assume we are in the Spirit if we consider ourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus; and if we are not allowing sin to reign in our mortal body so that we obey its lusts; and if we are not presenting the members of our body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but are presenting ourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness to God (Romans 6:11-13). Of course, if we are knowingly and unrepentantly practicing sin, we can rightly assume we are living according to the flesh, and that we do not have the Holy Spirit dwelling within.
  - b. We know we are in the Spirit if after being freed from the power of our sinful passions, by the redeeming work of Christ, we move forward in living accordingly (Romans 7:14-25). And here again, if we are giving free expression to any of our sinful passions, it means we living according to the flesh and not the Spirit.
  - c. We know we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit if we are setting our mind on the things of the Spirit and walking according the direction and influence of to the Spirit so that we live a life that fulfills the requirement of the Law (Romans 8:4-8).
3. And this brings us to vs 9, where Paul says that “you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you (*lives in you, has taken up residence in you*).” This raises several questions about the Holy Spirit that I want us to consider.
- a. First, according to the way scripture uses these labels, is there a difference between the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and Christ in you?
  - b. Second, when and how is the Holy Spirit given to believers?
  - c. Third, how do we know we have received the Holy Spirit and that He dwells within? *In a way, I just finished answering this question, but I want to it further by taking you to scriptures outside Romans.*
  - d. Fourth, what is so important about the Spirit of God dwelling in us?
4. First, according to the way scripture uses these labels, is there a difference between the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and Christ in you?
- a. Generally speaking, the answer is no. There may be an exception, which is why I am saying “generally speaking,” but the exceptions are just that, rare exceptions. Let me explain:

- (1) It is commonly understood within Christianity that God is somehow three persons in one. And though this is a mystery which defies exact explanations, it is a reality presented to us in the scriptures – from Genesis onward.
  - (2) Therefore, when the scriptures speak of the “Spirit” in relation to God or Jesus, we interpret that as a reference to the Holy Spirit, who is the third person in the Trinity.
  - b. When the scripture speaks of “Christ in you,” it is not implying that the physical Christ is in you, but rather the spirit of Christ is in you. Now because God is a trinity, we understand that the spirit of Christ is the third person of the Trinity, or the One we call the Holy Spirit.
  - c. Finally, regardless of the potential confusion created by the various labels for the Holy Spirit in the NT, I believe God speaks to us this way to affirm that Jesus Christ – in His physical and spirit forms – is vital to our understanding of God, justification, and eternal salvation.
5. Second, when and how is the Holy Spirit given to believers? The “when” and “how” questions, though related, are difficult to reduce to a single answer, even though most theology and statements of faith do just that. Let me explain.
- a. Jesus breathed on the disciples, and that is how they received the Holy Spirit. It happened this way – on the Sunday evening of Christ’s resurrection, the disciples were gathered in a room, and though the doors were shut, Jesus appeared in the room and said, “Peace be with you.” And after showing them His hands and side, He said, “as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” And then He breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”
  - b. John the Baptist said Jesus would baptize His followers with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matthew 3:11). In his sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter told those who were pierced to the heart and asked what they should do, to repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and that they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:37-38). These scriptures form the basis for the belief that the Holy Spirit is given at the time of baptism. And this belief was held by many in the early church and is still held by the Roman Catholic Church and some Protestant groups.
  - c. Jesus, himself, taught that if you ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit, God will give Him to you (Luke 11:11-13).

- d. There are several accounts in the book of Acts of the Holy Spirit being given as a result of church leaders laying hands on new believers and praying for them to be given the Holy Spirit. Paul experienced this when God sent Ananias to lay hands on him so he could regain his sight (Acts 8:14-17, 9:10-19, 19:1-7).
  - e. While Peter was speaking to the Gentile Cornelius, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message, and this happened before they were baptized (Acts 10:44-46).
  - f. And in Ephesians 1:13-14 . . . Paul says that after believing the gospel of our salvation, we are sealed in [Christ] with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, which (*our inheritance*) we will receive when Christ returns and God takes eternal possession of who and what belongs to Him.
    - (1) Add to these words of Paul, Jesus' words in John 3:5, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."
    - (2) Today, these two scripture portions form the basis for the accepted Protestant theology that says we receive the Holy Spirit at the moment we are born again.
  - g. My point in all this is that according to the scriptures, there has been more than one "when and how" for receiving the Holy Spirit. To debate which is the right way, or the way for today – as if we could prove one right way over another – seems unwise. If you have repented and put your faith in Jesus Christ, yet feel that you have not received the Holy Spirit, here are three suggested solutions:
    - (1) you can ask God to give Holy Spirit to you;
    - (2) you can ask for the church leaders to lay hands on you and pray for you to receive this gift;
    - (3) you can cling to and rest in the current accepted Protestant teaching that you received the Holy Spirit when you were born again.
6. Third, how do we know we have received the Holy Spirit and that He dwells within?
- a. According to Galatians 5:16-21, if you are NOT carrying out the desires of your flesh (*immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these*), it means you are walking by the power and assistance

of the indwelling Holy Spirit – which verifies that you have received the Holy Spirit.

- b. According to Galatians 5:22-23, if you are bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your daily life (*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*), it means you are walking by the power and assistance of the indwelling Holy Spirit – which means He is in you.
- c. If your assurance of having received the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues and/or prophesying, you have a reasonably dependable basis for believing you have been given the Holy Spirit to dwell within (Acts 10:44-46, 19:1-7).
  - (1) However, it is only a reasonably dependable basis because Jesus said, “Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness' (Matthew 7:22-23).
  - (2) And Paul said, “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:1-2).
  - (3) The point I am making here is that, according to God’s word, the growth of godly character and behavior is the most dependable sign of having received the Holy Spirit, whereas speaking in tongues and prophesying is only a dependable sign if godly character and behavior are present also.
7. Fourth, what is so important about the Spirit of God dwelling in us? The importance is that without Him, we cannot live a godly life. He is our help, our empowerment, our daily assistance, our prayer partner, our comforter, our primary source of divine conviction, our teacher of the scriptures, our source for understanding what we need to know about Jesus Christ, and our guide in applying the will and word of God to daily life. And in addition, He is Christ in us and God with us.

C. Returning to Romans 8:9, Paul concludes this verse by saying that if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

1. As I have already made clear, in referencing the Spirit of Christ, Paul is not speaking of another “spirit,” as if there are more than one divine spirits.
  - a. Rather, he is reinforcing our need for the Holy Spirit while at the same time reinforcing the fact that to be justified and given the gift of eternal life, we must believe in Jesus as the son of God, and as our redeemer, and as our Lord and Master.
  - b. In other words, Paul is using the words “Spirit of Christ” to do double-duty:
    - (1) to keep the necessity of faith in Christ before our eyes,
    - (2) and to continue talking about the necessity of the indwelling Holy Spirit for living a godly life.
2. Now, because these interchangeable labels can be confusing to the casual reader of scripture, I want to give you a Biblical basis for seeing that Paul as staying within the larger NT context when he speaks of Christ or the Spirit of Christ as synonymous with the Holy Spirit.
  - a. Jesus said something similar in John 14:23 . . . “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.” Surely we understand that Jesus is not referring to his physical self as dwelling within, but rather to the Spirit, that is, His Spirit and God’s Spirit as making their home in us.
  - b. In 2 Corinthians 13:5, Paul says: “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves (*that is, examine your character and our behavior*)! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test (*lack the character and behavior qualities of godliness*)? Again, it is not Jesus Christ in the flesh that is in us, but Jesus Christ in the form of the Spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit.
  - c. Finally, in Colossians 1:27b, Paul said, “to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Again, we understand this to be the Spirit of Christ, or what we commonly call the Holy Spirit.
3. The truth we ought to see here is this:
  - a. The indwelling Holy Spirit is essential to living a godly life – and living this Spirit empowered and assisted godly life is just as essential for justification and being given the gift of eternal salvation as is believing that Jesus is the son of God and our redeemer from the penalty and power of sin.

- b. In other words, faith in Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit cannot be separated. We are not justified and given the gift of eternal life on the basis of one over the other, or one but not the other. We are justified and given the gift of eternal life on the basis of faith in Christ and moving forward to live a Spirit empowered and assisted godly life.
    - c. Paul then proceeds to affirm this truth.
- D. Romans 8:10-11 . . . If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. [11] But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.
  - 1. To properly understand these two verses, we must see them as fitting into the same time frame, and we must keep the two sides of our justification and eternal salvation together – that is, we must keep the redeeming work of Jesus Christ (*which is one side*) together with the empowering and assisting work of the Holy Spirit (*which is the other side*).
  - 2. Therefore, if you have repented and put your faith in the redeeming work of Jesus Christ, though your flesh is still controlled by your sinful passions and therefore condemned to eternal damnation, your spirit has been born again and deemed righteous in the sight of God.
  - 3. However (*and this however takes place in approximately the same time frame as repentance and faith, or as some teach, it takes place at your baptism*), if you have received the Spirit of God so that the Holy Spirit dwells in you, then by His empowerment and assistance you will gain victory over your sinful passions and put to death the sinful deeds of your flesh – with the result being that even your mortal body, which was once ruled by your sinful passions, will manifest godliness in this life, and be raised incorruptible in the next.

### III. Conclusion

- A. In these verses, Paul presents the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. From here, Paul presents the role of the believer in response to the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- B. Romans 8:12-13 . . . So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—[13] for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.