

ROMANS 8:8-11 "The Spirit of Christ Resides In Every Child of God"

Paul has been spending a great deal of time on this reality concerning our spiritual walk with Christ as opposed to a walk which is self-directed, self-willed and controlled by the flesh, or the fleshly or old-self desires.

He makes the contrast in Rom 8:5-7 "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind of sinful man [Or mind set on the flesh] is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; 7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so."

The distinction is so clear and so diametrically opposed to one another that the one (the flesh) is referred to as death, while the other (the Spirit) is referred to as life and peace.

The reason Paul spends so much time on this issue is because this is a life and death situation. We in the church have a tendency to think that Christianity is simply our "ticket" to eternal life, and that the Church is our safe haven for getting away from the things of the world.

Paul's point is that Christianity is a base of operation to combat the spiritual forces which hold people in bondage which leads to death, a spiritual death which makes physical death look like a long awaited friend, because it separates people from God, and it's eternal.

The spiritual reality is that this war is not some game and the Church is not some rest home for Christians to simply enjoy the company of other people with like desires. We are not in the Body of Christ to challenge each other to spiritual shuffle board, or gather at a table for a round of spiritual cards or dominoes.

The church is not some club where we gather to make each other feel good. We gather to come to Mount Zion to worship our God, to be strengthened in His Spirit so we may go out into this world with the gospel of Christ and do battle in the love and strength of our God who has given us life and peace in Christ.

Christ's church is a hospital for sinners who see their need of deliverance; whose chief physician has not only given us the solution for death, but has died Himself and conquered death by defeating the grave, giving us that same resurrection life.

There's a lot of religiosity in the church-at-large today, but very little in the way of truly desiring to please God, God's way, because much of what is being touted as spiritual is nothing more than man's fleshly attempt to baptize his own wisdom and will with a sprinkling of "God consciousness".

But notice what Paul says to this attempt to please God in the flesh.

Rom 8:8 "Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God."

Here he speaks to the person of the world whose desires are self-oriented and not God-oriented. These are the people of the world who, as Paul says in verse 7, are hostile toward God.

The unbeliever, or maybe I should say, the one who will not believe, cannot please God by any stretch of the imagination. The reason they cannot please God is because the basis for pleasing God rests on faith in God.

This is not just a problem of the world, but also of the church. Living by faith and trusting God and His word are exercises which seem too difficult for many Christians. But, if our lives are consumed with wanting to please God then we must start learning to stop leaning on our own understanding and trust God in all aspects of life.

The problem is many people are not consumed with pleasing God in the way God desires, they're more concerned with pleasing self. And when self is the focus of life then faith is placed on the back burner. Remember what the writer of Hebrews told us in Heb 11:6?

"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."

Those who are in the flesh (unbelievers) cannot please God and we Christians, who are operating in the flesh, (our existing old nature that we battle), as opposed to the Spirit, cannot please God as He desires for us to please Him.

In making this contrast between the flesh and the Spirit Paul goes out of his way to demonstrate how the flesh is sold into the bondage of sin

[Rom.7:14]; how nothing good dwells in the flesh [7:18]; how the mind set on the flesh is death [8:6]; how the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God [8:7]; and how the flesh cannot please God in [8:8].

And then Paul directs his thoughts back to the believer and reminds the believer, "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." (Rom 8:9)

In other words, if you are in the Spirit then your life will be controlled by the Spirit, and will desire the things of the Spirit, and will operate in the realm of the Spirit, which is a life of faith and trust in God, and an obedience to His word out of gratitude for so great a salvation He's given us in Christ.

Why will you do these things in Christ? Because the Spirit of God has adopted you and sealed you and empowered you and given you the desire with the new life you have in Christ to accomplish these things to the glory of God.

But, the idea of verse 9 also conveys that only a Christian can be in the Spirit. And if one is in the Spirit then that one has life and peace from God, as mentioned in Rom.8:6, and that life will demonstrate itself as growth in that spiritual life.

Only the Spirit of God can give life, only the Spirit of God can sustain life and without the Spirit of Christ no one is truly born again, or as Paul puts it, belongs to God.

Notice how Paul interchanges the Spirit of God with the Spirit of Christ in verse 9. They're one and the same. Jesus Christ is God and so to call the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ is consistent with who Christ is. Then if God and Christ are the same essence, then it stands to reason that the Spirit is God also.

The same God who created the universe has taken up residence in every one of His people. It is the Spirit of God who makes this possible as people are given life in Christ by faith.

Eph 2:18-22 "For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. 19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and

aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives (present tense) by his Spirit."

This is why Paul can say that if you don't have the Spirit you do not belong to God and the converse of Eph.2:19 is also true; 'you are still foreigners and aliens, not fellow citizens with God's people and not members of God's household.'

The question then may arise; is it possible for a Christian not to be indwelt with the Spirit of Christ? The answer is an emphatic no!

Prior to Christ's resurrection the Spirit of God was with His people in the sense that He wooed them, came alongside them, directed their steps, protected them and so on. But prior to Christ's resurrection the Spirit of God is not said to take up permanent residence in all of His people.

This is what Jesus alluded to in Joh 14:16-18 "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives *with* you and will be *in* you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

Jesus will come to us.....how? By taking up permanent residence in us through the Spirit of God, or the Spirit of Christ as He is referred to. Not to take up residence in us would leave us as orphans. An orphan is a child who used to have a parent, but who has been abandoned for whatever reason.

Christ said I won't abandon or orphan you. I will never leave you or forsake you. I will come to you as I place My Spirit *in* you.

Gal 4:6 "Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."

The only reason any truly born again Christian can call out to our God as Lord and Savior is because of the Spirit who gives us life through the Son who enables us to call out.

1Jo 4:13 "We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit."

There are three Greek words which denote the different ways the Spirit of God works in the lives of His people. Two of the words are found in Joh.14:17 when Jesus says, "for he lives *with* you and will be *in* you."

The Greek word for *with* is *para* and it suggests the Spirit who comes along side to enable. The other Greek word is *en* for our English word *in* and suggests taking up residence.

But there's a third word in the Greek which is *epi* and it means upon. And as the Spirit of God who indwells us, works in us, He will often come upon (*epi*) us for empowering, so that we may serve Christ in the power of the Spirit.

The scriptures refer to this as the filling of the Spirit. Is the filling of the Spirit and the indwelling of the Spirit the same thing? Well, we need to let the scriptures define that.

But first let me go back to one of my sermons in the book of Acts when I dealt with the Holy Spirit's work in our lives.

We'll quickly look at four different passages relating to this issue. The first one is when Jesus is speaking to His disciples found in JOH 14:16-20 "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever- 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20 On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you."

The second passage is found in JOH 15:26 "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me."

The third is JOH 16:7 "But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."

The fourth passage is John 20:22. This is the day that Jesus was resurrected from the dead. He met with them and showed them that He had the nail scars and spear scar and that He was very much alive.

JOH 20:22 "And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

The risen Savior breathed on them and they received the Holy Spirit. The word receive here in the Greek is *lambano* and does not denote something being offered that you may or may not accept, rather it denotes to get hold of.

No longer is the Spirit simply abiding with (*para*) them and prompting them, but now He has a hold on them. They have received the Holy Spirit because Jesus Christ sealed them with that act.

This is what Paul refers to in Eph 1:13-14 "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory."

So, we know that when we believe in Christ as Lord and Savior we are in the Holy Spirit as He is in us. And when Jesus breathed on His disciples He indwelt them or sealed them with the Holy Spirit. They are now believers who, prior to this event, only had the Spirit with them (*para*), but now He is in them (*en.*)

So, when Jesus talks with them in Acts 1:5 He's talking with people who are believers *indwelt* with the Holy Spirit. And yet, He says you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

It's interesting, after they received the Holy Spirit in Jn.20:22 what happens to the disciples? Do they go out and set the world on fire for Christ? No way; they went fishing.....and they didn't even catch anything until Christ comes onto the scene and causes a miraculous catch for them.

This filling of the Spirit in acts chapter one is what God did for them to enable them to serve the risen Christ in His power. We see this on numerous occasions in the lives of believers who are already indwelt with the Spirit where the Spirit filled, or came upon them, to accomplish a particular task.

Act 4:8-10 "Then Peter, *filled with the Holy Spirit*, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! 9 If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, 10 then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,

whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed."

When Paul was confronted with a man who was trying to disrupt the ministry of the Gospel Paul acted in accordance with the power and the will of the Spirit.

Act 13:9-11 "Then Saul, who was also called Paul, *filled with the Holy Spirit*, looked straight at Elymas and said, 10 "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? 11 Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun." Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand."

Paul speaks of this power of God in relation to our seeking God and living in obedience and submission to His will.

Eph 3:16-21 "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."

Being filled with the Spirit is not some magical thing reserved for super spiritual Christians. Being filled with the Spirit is to be sought by every believer in Christ as we walk in the Spirit and desire to be used by the Spirit.

The apostles all desired to be used by the Spirit, and so it should come as no surprise that they were continually "filled" with the Spirit as the Spirit came upon (*epi*) them in power to witness for Christ, to lead the way in service to Christ for whatever the Lord wanted to accomplish through them.

Some would say that this filling of the Holy Spirit is a second blessing or a second work of the Spirit. It's not; there are lots of

blessings and lots of workings of the Spirit in your life. What it is, is an appropriation, by faith, of the power of the Holy Spirit. The power is always there, because He is the same Spirit Who is indwelling you. But, as we're told in Eph.5:15 "be filled with the Spirit."

That's a command put to us to act and live by faith and seek the things of the Spirit, knowing that the Spirit of God will be faithful to empower us so that He may use us. And when we're doing that we will not fulfill the desires of the flesh, which brings me full circle, and is why we need to consider the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives when we consider this battle Paul speaks of in Romans.

Rom 8:9-11 "You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. 10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you."

Paul says in verse 10 that if Christ is in you; and by that he's referring to the Spirit of Christ or the Spirit of God, as we saw in verse 9), "then your body is dead because of sin."

Different commentators look at this part of verse 9 a couple of different ways and both ways are true. On the one hand, our bodies, (if by bodies is meant our fleshly nature), are dead to the things of God because of sin and its influence.

On the other, hand some believe this to mean our actual physical bodies will die because of the curse of sin given to Adam, where in the day that he sinned he died both spiritually, and many years later physically.

And yet as we look at the rest of verse 10 we see that despite the deadly condition, whether spiritual or physical, we are alive and will continue to live because of righteousness. Righteousness in the sense of Christ's righteousness on our behalf, and righteousness in the sense that we show that the Spirit is alive in us because of the way we practice righteous lives by faith which show forth the fruit of the Spirit who gives life.

Now the reason some believe that Paul speaks of the physical body dying, because of sin, is because of the follow up verse in 11....
"And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you."

Our hope goes beyond just being forgiven of the penalty of our sins in Christ. Our hope includes our physical bodies being resurrected where we are given a new body which will be like Christ's gloried body.

Paul has been talking about the flesh and the fleshly nature which is corrupted by sin. And here he gives us some glorious news that the flesh will one day have the total victory as well when it is raised by the resurrecting power of Christ and our spirits are reunited with the body.

1Co 15:39-44 "All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. 40 There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. 41 The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. 42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body."

One day we will receive our resurrection bodies and we will be complete and whole, in the fullest sense of the word, with Christ forever. But think of it, the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead indwells and gives us all power to serve and love and flee from all ungodliness.

There is no sin, no power, no temptation which cannot be overcome by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit who continually fills us and empowers us as we submit to Him.

Let me repeat Paul's blessing to the Ephesians because it's God's blessing and promise to us today. God desires that we honor Him with lives of obedience and service as we love Him above all. But He promises to be there for us so that we may accomplish His will to His glory as the Spirit of Christ is *with* us, *in* us, and *upon* us for the work of furthering the Kingdom of God.

Eph 3:16 -21 "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."