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Romans

So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Romans 8:8

This verse is explicit and obvious - one who is "in the flesh" cannot please God. There are two possible instances tied up in the thought. The first is the unregenerate soul - the person who has not been cleansed by Jesus' work. Any person who has not come to Christ is in this category to the full measure. The second instance is a person who has called on Christ, but has his mind and actions directed to the things of the flesh. This is the natural man being allowed to take over during our earthly walk. When we as believers please the flesh, it is obvious that we are not pleasing to God.

In the first instance, we can think of a bully down the street. He is wholly unpleasing to those around him. There are no family affections and he is kept separate from our care or concern. In the second instance, we can think of our own children when they are disobedient. At such a time, they aren't pleasing to us and yet there is the stronger bond and tie of family. Despite their inability to please us due to their current actions, they are members of the family. Though unpleasing, they are not rejected.

In both circumstances, there is nothing to say that either child won't voluntarily turn and make right choices. The bully could give up his ways, seeing what is right and pleasing to those around him. If he were an orphan, he may even be adopted into the family because of his turn to right living. Likewise our child will probably

get over his disobedience and turn back to right living. If not, it doesn't make him any less our child.

The concept of total depravity in a person in no way negates volitional acts of the will to "see the good" and turn to it. Nor does calling on Jesus guarantee that we are instantly perfect saints who never sin and who can't lapse into more sin. Categories are important and acts of the will cannot be dismissed in our theological conceptions of who we are in relation to God. The difference in the two who "cannot please God" mentioned above is that one is a family member and the other isn't. The change in relationship doesn't necessarily guarantee that our on-going relationship will be perfect, but it does guarantee final results

Life application: Romans 8:8 is clearly stated. If we are in the flesh we cannot please God. Some people are in the flesh completely, having not called on Christ. They are apart from the covenant promises of God. Some people are living in the flesh, despite having moved from Adam to Christ. This could be us and therefore we need to be attentive to our new state and family ties, and live our lives in a manner which is pleasing to our Lord and God.

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. Romans 8:9

The past verses have shown the contrast between being "in the Spirit" and "in the flesh." Today we are told very directly that if we are in Christ, we are "not in the flesh but in the Spirit." And then Paul qualifies his statement, "if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you." This is our actual state before God if we are truly believers. We are positionally in the Spirit. As noted in previous verses, this doesn't mean we are now glorified and incapable of sin. Nor does it mean that we can't live as if "in the flesh." This kind of thinking is obviously wrong and leads down avenues of absurdity.

To be in position and in practice are not always in accord with each other. In position we have moved from carnal Adam to spiritual Christ if we have believed the gospel and received the Spirit.

The next sentence goes on to state, "Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His." This is as obvious a statement as can be seen. If we don't have the Spirit of Christ, we don't belong to Christ. What is less obvious is the exact meaning of "the Spirit of Christ." Some scholars state that this is not speaking of the Holy Spirit (meaning as an entity), but rather the "temper" or "disposition" of Christ. In other words, conducting ourselves in the same type of walk as He walks.

The reason for this analysis is because the term "Spirit of Christ" is used only one other time in the Bible, in 1 Peter 1:11. That, however, isn't a valid argument. Meaning is derived based on the intent of the writer. The intent is certainly being tied to the preceding sentence which mentions the "Spirit of God." This then is parallelism; the repetition of a thought to make a point. The terms Holy Spirit, Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ, etc. are used synonymously throughout the New Testament and such is the case here.

The Spirit issues from the God Father, through the Son as is evidenced in passages such as 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19 -

"Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation."

The issuing of the Spirit is actually more important than one might assume. Whether He issues from the Father apart from the Son or from the Father through the Son is an immensely important theological concept to be considered. Disagreement on this issue caused one of the greatest rifts in Christianity, but the Bible is clear on the progression of the Spirit. What Paul is showing us here is that

"the Spirit of God" and "the Spirit of Christ" are one in the same; they are both terms speaking of "the Holy Spirit."

Life application: Seemingly small matters can actually carry great theological weight and importance and therefore must be considered both carefully and with respect to the intent of God as revealed in Scripture. Little diversions from the avenue of sound interpretation can lead to great flaws in our theology.

And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. Romans 8:10

"If Christ is in you..." This can mean nothing other than the doctrine of the Trinity. In verse 9, we read that we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit "... if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you." Then came the mentioning of "the Spirit of Christ." Some, as noted, have tried to diminish the weight and intent of that by stating it implies "disposition" rather than "personhood."

However, verse 10 clearly states "if Christ is in you." This is an indwelling, not a disposition. These two verses, combined with verse 11, can mean nothing other than what the plain text shows. The Three are One because it is said elsewhere that God the Father raised Christ from the dead (Galatians 1:1).

Paul shows us that if in fact Christ is in us that our "body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Our mortal bodies are dead. Disagreement does come over the phrase that our "body is dead because of sin." But looking back over the previous chapters, it is certain that it is speaking of our life before Christ. We were unregenerate in our nature; fallen in Adam. This body of death is replaced with life.

We have died to Christ and, positionally, we are seated with Him now (Ephesians 2:6). Therefore, we are alive, and eternally so, because of righteousness. This is the imputed righteousness of Christ. He is in us, we are sealed, and therefore we are alive. This is what Jesus spoke of in John 3 and what He also meant in John 11:25, 26 - "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."

Life application: In Christ, we are dead to sin. Sin no longer has mastery over us. But it can still afflict us if we allow it to. It is incumbent on each of us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling - not in the sense that we must merit salvation through works, but that we must work in the salvation we have been given to the glory of God and not according to the flesh.

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. Romans 8:11

As noted in 8:10, the Trinity is seen in the verses we've been looking at. Throughout the New Testament, the Spirit is given different titles which complete the same tasks.

The Spirit of God dwells in us - Romans 8:9

The Holy Spirit dwells in us - 1 Corinthians 6:19

The Spirit of Christ dwells in us - Romans 8:9, 10

God the Father raised Jesus from the dead - Galatians 1:1

The Spirit of God raised Jesus from the dead - Romans 8:11

This isn't intended to be an diversionary discourse on the Trinity, but here - along with several other key points in the New Testament, is a good spot to at least note this.

Having said that, we can now note the content of Romans 8:11. In this verse, Paul begins with "but." This is given in contrast to the thought in 8:10 which said, "the body is dead because of sin." Our bodies are fallen and as Paul notes elsewhere, "So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. ... Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption." 1 Corinthians 15:42 & 50

Despite our corrupt and fallen bodies, we who have trusted Jesus are indwelt with the Holy Spirit. It is what Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 4:7 - "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us." Like the precious oil which exceeds the value of the jar, the glory of the Spirit in us far surpasses the abasement of the mortal flesh in which He dwells.

Because this glorious Spirit has taken up residence in us, we have the absolute assurance that "He who raised Christ from the dead, will also give life to [our] mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in [us]."

The surety of Christ's resurrection is found in us. The truth of eternal salvation is so evident from Scripture that if you attend in a church which teaches otherwise, it's time to get up and move to a more sound home. Paul isn't saying these words to confuse us, nor does God provide either confusion or waste of thought in His word.

Yes, our bodies are dead to sin, but they contain a guarantee (2 Corinthians 5:5) which is based on the surety of God's word that they are sealed and will be given life which is truly life. Our mortal shall be clothed in immortality. Hallelujah!

Life application: If salvation isn't eternal, then God made a mistake by sealing you with the Holy Spirit. God doesn't make mistakes. Your salvation is eternal. When you call on Jesus and believe in Him and His work then you are on the glide-path to glory.