
LIVING OUT OUR SPIRITUAL SONSHIP

ROMANS 8:9-17

Jason Brodehl

INTRODUCTION

What is the Spirit's role in our life as Christians? What is it doing in us and for us? That is what we are going to be looking at this evening.

Let's turn in our Bibles to Romans chapter 8. Paul opened this chapter with there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Paul can be confident of this because Christ has fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law in his very own flesh. He was the perfect human being who fulfilled God's law perfectly. And in Him, He also took upon Himself our just penalty for our sin. Therefore, we are free from the requirement of the law.

Paul goes on to describe two types of people. Those who set their minds on the flesh and those who set their minds on the Spirit. One way leads to death, or separation from God, while the other leads to life and peace with God. What Paul is conveying is that we are either living for self or the Savior. Before we move any further, let's stop and pray.

[C]OUR NEW SPIRIT

Even though our focus this evening will be on verses 9-17, I want to start in verse 7 to give us context in the flow of thought here.

⁷ *For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.*
⁸ *Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.* ⁹ *You, however...*

[C] OUR SPIRITUAL DWELLING

Let me stop right there. Paul has been speaking in the third person plural up to this point. He now transitions to first person. He is now personally addressing the saints in Rome. For us today, we can read it as if he is addressing us.

Now let's pick up in verse 9 again.

⁹ *You (Saints at Clearcreek Chapel), however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.*

How can Paul say they have the Spirit? How do you know you have the Spirit? He seems to cast some doubt with his use of the word "if" here. It appears as a conditional statement. If this, then that. But actually here in the Greek, the condition is assumed to be true; therefore it can be understood as "seeing that you have the Spirit". So, he is not intending to cast doubt in their minds at all. Let me summarize this text like this, "*You, by contrast (to those who are in the flesh), are not basically under the control of sinful human nature but of the Spirit. You are therefore not unable to please God since God's Spirit is dwelling in you. (Now if there should be anyone who*

*shows by his life and actions that he does not possess the Spirit of Christ, such a person does not belong to Christ. He is not a Christian at all.)*¹

Paul confirms they, meaning the Saints in Rome, have the Spirit. Now, back to our question, how does he know that? Some people believe there are two baptisms. One of water and the other of the Spirit. There are handful of verses which would affirm and confirm only one baptism. No one needs a separate baptism by the Spirit in order to receive the Spirit. I could use 1 Corinthians 12:13, ¹³*For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.* But I would like to use Ephesians 1:13-14 this evening. Ephesians 1:13-14 says, *In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,*¹⁴ *who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.* See verse 13. It says “you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation and believed in him” and then “were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.” First one hears the gospel, believes upon it, then they are sealed with the Holy Spirit. This seal is not by some mark like you may receive when you enter an event indicating you have paid your admittance fee. No, you are sealed by the Spirit’s dwelling within you. This seal is irrevocable and eternal. It cannot be removed. By faith you believe, and by faith you receive the Spirit. There is no other way and there is no other Holy Spirit baptism.

With that being said, Paul also notes, there are those who do not belong to Christ. They do not possess the Spirit. They are walking in death, separated from God, and dead in their sins. They have not confessed with their mouths nor believed in their hearts that God raised Jesus from the dead. (See Romans 10:9). In any case, the question remains still true for us today. Who do you believe Jesus to be? There is no greater decision in all of life than how you answer that question.

[C] OUR CONFLICTING TENSION

For those of us who can confess and do believe then there exists a tension in our lives. Life, and death, spiritually speaking, are opposing forces. Let me explain. Look at verse 10-11.

¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ 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.

Look at the comparison in verse 10. We have body, death, and sin. Then Spirit, life, and righteousness.

Although we are dead to sin’s power, we are still feeling its effects in our physical bodies. As I get older, I understand more intimately the physical dying of my body. It’s not fun. The severe fluctuations of recent temperature changes can wreak havoc on joints. Some of you experience this. This body is not what it was intended to be. Billions of dollars are being spent every year on health and wellness for what outcome? Prolong life? Make it more comfortable? Look, I am not opposed to eating healthy and exercising and being a good steward of your body. You cannot escape death. Dr. Lloyd-Jones, writing as a physician as well as a pastor, says it like this, “The moment we enter into this world and begin to live, we also begin to die. Your first breath is one of the last you will ever take!...the principle of decay, leading to death, is in every one of us.”

¹ Hendriksen, William, and Simon J. Kistemaker. 1953–2001. [*Exposition of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*](#). Vol. 12–13. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

But thankfully, the dying of our bodies is not the end of the story. Because of Jesus, because of His Spirit, we have hope. This life is not all there is. And as our physical bodies are decaying, our spiritual life waits with anticipation for the new creation! We are waiting for our resurrection. Look at verse 11 again, ¹¹ *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.* Our resurrection is intimately tied to Jesus' resurrection. Since the Spirit raised Him, the Spirit, who dwells in us now, will raise us on the last day!

Paul puts it like this in 1 Corinthians 15,

⁴⁸ *Earthly people are like the earthly man, and heavenly people are like the heavenly man. ⁴⁹ Just as we are now like the earthly man, we will someday be like the heavenly man. ⁵⁰ What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that our physical bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. These dying bodies cannot inherit what will last forever. ⁵¹ But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! - Praise God!*

[C] OUR NEW MOTIVATION

But in the meantime, while we live in this fallen world, waiting for His return, the tension exists between the flesh and Spirit. Look with me at verses 12-14.

¹² *So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*

We have been set free from sin, remember chapter 7? We are no longer indebted to the flesh. But look with me at what Paul writes here. You would expect verse 12 to say this, "We are debtors, not to the flesh, but to the spirit." But that's not what he says. He says "we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh." Those who are battling sin belong to Christ, in fact not only belong, but are truly sons of God. Just as Psalm 23 says, "The Lord is our shepherd...", so is the Spirit with us. The sons of God are being "led" by Him. He is our guide and our protector. He is leading us into the truth (Jn 16:13) and into holiness. Unlike sin, which may at first only gently seduce, then deceitfully begin to drive as a hard taskmaster, the Spirit relies on persuasion rather than force. ²

Back to the indebtedness comment. We are now family and cared for as such. We then have a familial obligation, or indebtedness, to put to death the deeds of the flesh. Paul does not have to tell you that you are debtors to the new Father. No one has to tell you "You have an obligation to your family." It is a natural innate desire. No matter how you feel, you feel obligated to serve your family. If you have had aging parents, then you know the struggle. All their lives they loved, protected, and cared for you. And you, in return love them. But the time comes when you may need to make the decision on their care and future.

You are sons and daughters of God. He, God the Father, did not save and leave us to fend for ourselves! No, He sent His Spirit to dwell within us so that we have help. Our spiritual journey is NOT based upon performance or feeling, it based on the truth of God's Word. We have no idea how much the Spirit helps us and continues to

² Barker, Kenneth L. 1994. [*Expositor's Bible Commentary \(Abridged Edition: New Testament\)*](#). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

preserve us for eternity. Even in the midst our failures and doubts. If we were left to ourselves, we would never make it.

So, as family we battle sin. This struggle is the mark of a believer. Do you feel at times that you are constantly battling sin, sometimes feeling defeated? I know this is going to sound counterintuitive, but praise God you are feeling and facing this tension. Sinclair Ferguson puts it like this:

*“His presence as ‘life-giving Spirit’ in the body of death **heightens** rather than diminishes the Christian’s awareness of the tensions implied in life in the Spirit. Any assumption that the fullness of the Spirit **relieves the conflicts** of this life misshapes the New Testament teaching. In fact, the presence of the Spirit tends to **maximize** rather than minimize the sense of contrast between the present and the future....”³*

But some of us, find ourselves as Proverbs 26:11 says, ¹¹“Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.” It reminds of those criminals who are repeat offenders. One study found that an estimated 68% of released prisoners were arrested within 3 years, 79% within 6 years, and 83% within 9 years.⁴ It is difficult to comprehend that kind of decision making. Why do they continue in a life of crime when there is so much opportunity available in our country? Yet in a way, some of us do it every single day of our lives with our sin. Now, I am not advocating or preaching sinlessness. But what I am saying is that those who belong to Christ, will fight to put to death the deeds of the body by believing and trusting in the promises of God. We are either separating ourselves from the life giving Spirit, or living in His light of grace and forgiveness. The fight is not a physical toil, but rather a humble submission to truth. Are you a repeat offender who has lost their motivation to fight sin? Living your life in defeat, forgetting that you have been set free from the power sin? Many of those repeat criminal offenders, know no other life than a life of crime. In their eyes, it is all they have.

[C] OUR IDENTITY IN THE SPIRIT

But that is not you brother and sister! Keep reading our text. Look with at verses 15-17.

¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

[C] WE ARE ADOPTED

The Spirit we receive is not a spirit of slavery. We have nothing to fear. No fear of death, no fear of condemnation, and no fear of punishment. We are treated as sons and daughters of God and brothers and sisters to Christ. Our relationship has changed from being enemies of God to being children of God. It is an entirely new relationship. God knew exactly what He was getting when He added you to His family. How does this look in our lives now then?

In Mark 14:36, we read where Jesus was praying the garden of Gethsemane. Mark records his prayer like this, ³⁶“And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but

³ Ferguson, Sinclair B. 1996. *The Holy Spirit*. Contours of Christian Theology. Downers Grove, Ill. InterVarsity Press. Pg. 178

⁴ <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/2018-update-prisoner-recidivism-9-year-follow-period-2005-2014>

what you will.” Here, in the garden, is the only place the gospels record Jesus asking for something other than the Father’s will. All through John’s gospel we read how Jesus says, “I and the father are one” and “the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.” But here, at this moment, knowing what lies ahead, He seeks a different plan for His end. There is no shame in crying out to the Father when we are weak and/or doubting. I am not saying Jesus is doubting the Father, but He is asking for another way out.

So, we given the same permission to cry out to God the Father, in the exact same way as Christ, when we need Him, which is every single day. Sinclair Ferguson helps us once again. He puts it like this, “What Paul is saying, however, is that even in the darkest hour there is a co-operative and affirmative testimony given by the Spirit. It is found in the very fact that, although he may be broken bruised, tossed about with fears and doubts, the child of God nevertheless in his need cries out, “Father! As instinctively as a child who has fallen and been hurt calls out in similar language, ‘Daddy, help me!’ Assurance of sonship is not reserved for the highly sanctified Christian; is it the birthright of even the weakest and most oppressed believer. This is its glory.” Amen.

[C] WE ARE HEIRS

But it gets even better, as if it could. If we are sons and daughters of God, it means we will also inherit what Christ has. What does that mean for us? The musical play Annie contains a wonderful illustration of becoming an heir of God. When Annie moves from the orphanage to the Warbucks Mansion, it’s an incredible change for her. She leaves behind a spiteful, alcoholic caretaker and enters a relationship with a caring father. She goes from having no possessions to having a fortune at her disposal. The hard-knock life is overcome by the brightness of a sunny tomorrow. Seen from a Christian perspective, Annie pictures what being a co-heir with Christ means.⁵ But the contrast is so much more than a rags to riches story. Our inheritance, is Christ Himself. We will dwell with Him for eternity. Our story is a death to life story, a resurrection story. His resurrection is our resurrection. His inheritance is our inheritance.

John Calvin writes of our inheritance, “We do not have the full enjoyment of it at present. . . . We walk . . . in hope, and we do not see the thing as if it were present, but we see it by faith. . . . Although, then, the world gives itself liberty to trample us under foot, as they say; although our Lord keeps us tried with many temptations; although he humbles us in such a way that it may seem we are as sheep appointed to the slaughter, so that we are continually at death’s door, yet we are not destitute of a good remedy. And why? Seeing that the Holy Spirit reigns in our hearts, we have something for which to give praise even in the midst of all our temptations. . . . [Therefore,] we should rejoice, mourn, grieve, give thanks, be content, wait” (from Calvin’s Ephesian sermons, delivered in Geneva, 1558—59).

[C] WE ARE SUFFERERS

As the final phrase of verse 17 says, we are “fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.” The path to the kingdom, is narrow and paved with difficulty. But we have a hope. And next week will look at this path of groaning.

[C] REFLECT AND RESPOND

⁵ <https://www.gotquestions.org/co-heirs-with-Christ.html>

I began this sermon with the question, what is the Spirit's role in our life as Christians? What is it doing in us and for us? I hope you heard the following:

[CLICK] By faith you believe, and by faith you have received the Spirit. He now dwells within you; He lives within you. In the Old Testament, God dwelt AMONG His people. With the inauguration of the new Kingdom, the new creation, God now dwells WITHIN His people. He lives within you. You are never alone.

Our lives are temporary in one sense but eternal in every other. When does eternal life begin? Not when we die. John 17:3 says, ³*And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.* Eternal life begins the moment you believe in Christ. And while our bodies are dying, it won't be long before our physical bodies will match our spiritual ones. We have a hope.

[CLICK] Paul writes in his first letter to Timothy this, *"Rather train yourself for godliness; ⁸for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.* Spend your life training for godliness, it will never be a waste of time or effort.

[CLICK] The Spirit is active in your salvation, sanctification, glorification, and will be in your resurrection. The Good Shepherd is leading and guiding you every step of the way, even in your battles with the flesh. He wants your holiness and not so much your happiness.

[CLICK] Embrace the struggle in the journey. Don't lose sight of your new identity. You are a child of the living God. Be who you are in Christ.