

Sermon 65: Romans 8:9-11: The Implications of Being in the Spirit

OUTLINE

The Spirit and salvation

The Spirit and the Trinity

The Spirit and the resurrection

INTRODUCTION

Paul speaks about the Holy Spirit more in Romans 8 than any other chapter in his writings. Percentage wise Paul mentions the Spirit 19 times making it once every 2 verses. Surprisingly Paul does not mention the gifts of the Holy Spirit once. Instead, Paul mentions the liberty that the Spirit brings, 'For the law of the Spirit has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.' (v2). Living a life of law fulfilling holiness 'according to the Spirit' (v4). By the Spirit we mortify or put to death the deeds of the body (v13). That we are led by the Spirit (v14); that the Spirit is the Spirit of adoption by which we cry 'Abba, Father' (v15); it is the Spirit who bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God (v16); the Spirit is the firstfruits of the resurrection (v23); and the Spirit intercedes for us in our weaknesses (v26). In the verses that we are considering this morning, v9-11, we will see more of what Paul has to say about the Holy Spirit. Paul speaks about the Holy Spirit in connection with salvation, the Trinity and the resurrection. If you have the Holy Spirit that means something with regards to your possessing salvation, your relating to the Trinity and the final resurrection of your body.

Let's remind ourselves of the flow of this passage and plunge into the text.

Paul is talking to the Romans about the many reasons they have for assurance. He has already stated in v1-4 that they can be assured because they are no longer condemned. This is so because God has done for us in Christ what we could not do for ourselves (v2-3). Verses 5-8 were an expansion on the idea that we have been saved in order to be holy (v4), and Paul compared the believer, those in the Spirit with the unbeliever, those in the flesh. We took some time to show why the unbeliever cannot please God and the believer can. Verses 9-11 return us to the next argument for assurance being because you possess the Spirit you can be assured. For having the Spirit implies you are saved, that you are indwelt by the Trinity and that you will one day be resurrected. Paul has just finished off verse 8 talking about the unbeliever who does not have the Spirit being unable to please God. As Christians we are instinctively self-doubting and insecure because we know we are sinners very well. So Paul proceeds in the verses we are looking at this morning to assure them that he thinks they are Christians, and states the basis upon which someone is a Christian. 'You, 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 does not belong to Him.' Let's begin by examining this statement.

The Spirit and salvation

Based on this verse there are only two types of people, those in the flesh who do not have the Spirit and those in the Spirit that do. This is a simple observation but it is an important one because there are those who introduce a third category, Christians who are in the flesh, or carnal Christians. Granted it is possible for Christians to act like those in the flesh but you cannot be in the Spirit and the flesh according to Paul's meaning here, for being in the flesh is to be in your original Adamic state of being dead in trespasses and sin, not united to Christ, not born again. I make this point because we speak wrongly about our sins when we say 'so and so is *in* the flesh.' Instead we should say 'so and so is walking *according to* the flesh.' Why is the distinction important? Well, if you are in the Spirit you can never be in the flesh again. Just as the life of Jesus Christ can never be killed the life that you now participate in can never die, being in the flesh is being dead in trespasses and sins, and that is something you can never be again. Secondly, it overshadows the new reality of your having died to sin and its power. To speak of a Christian being in the flesh is to speak of being under its power and jurisdiction. And there have been many Christians who have robbed Christians of assurance due to this small wrong statement.

Another misunderstanding I have encountered with this verse was when I was in the Charismatic church. The thinking went like this: Speaking in tongues is the evidence that one has been baptised in the Spirit, every Christian can speak in tongues and manifest the Spirit, therefore if I do not speak in tongues I do not have the Spirit and am not a Christian. Thankfully this has not been widely held but was quickly jettisoned.

It must not be overlooked though how Paul defines a Christian, it is the person who has the Holy Spirit. A Christian cannot be made by baptism, by being born to Christian parents, by the laying on of hands or any other invented means. We become Christians when we are regenerated by the Holy Spirit, when we believe and repent and are given the Holy Spirit of adoption as a firstfruits, a guarantee and a seal of our belonging to God. In Liberal circles of theology you will hear the idea that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit in every religion. They say that although all the various creeds will be different, each of the religions has a common experience of the Spirit at the core making all people of every faith Christians. This however is not what Paul believes about the Holy Spirit. We know that the Holy Spirit was given to bear testimony to Christ, this is what Jesus Himself says in John 15:26, 'But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.' We receive the Holy Spirit not by tapping into some universal experience accessible to all religions, no we receive the Holy Spirit when we believe the Gospel of Christ when it is preached to us. Paul makes this clear in Eph. 1:13-14, '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.' Paul says the same things to the Galatians who had forgotten that they were saved by faith through believing the gospel and were putting their confidence in the ritual of circumcision, 'Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?' Gal. 3:5.

Every human being is not born with the Holy Spirit. Every person cannot access the Spirit simply by sincerely searching in their own religions. The Spirit and the word work together and we are born again and receive the Spirit when we hear and believe.

How do I know whether I have the Spirit? No one can believe in Christ as saviour and repent apart from the enabling of the Spirit, so if you are trusting in Christ and have repented of your sins, this is proof of the Spirit at work in you. No one can love God and hate sin apart from the Spirit for the mind of the flesh does not and cannot submit to God; therefore if you feel the struggle of Romans 7 in your life this struggle is only true in the case of those who have the Spirit who wars against the flesh within us. Do you hunger for spiritual things that the natural man hates? Do you love prayer, worship, to learn from the Bible, to be taught through preaching, to confess your sins, to fellowship with other believers, etc., this is proof of life. And if you have the Spirit, that settles it you are a Christian. Paul says to you in v10, 'But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.' This means, although you have a body that will die, a body inherited from Adam, a body that still torments you with its sinful inclinations, because you have the Spirit you are alive and will live eternally. All of this on account of Christ's righteousness being credited to you as a gift. His righteousness makes us holy in the sight of God and makes us worthy of sonship, inheritance, and all the other blessings that are ours in Christ. Possessing the Spirit means you possess life and fullness of life will be yours.

Think of it this way. When you have an organ transplant your body is programmed to attack foreign tissue and reject the donated organ. In order for a new kidney to be received by your body you need to take certain medicines which cause the body not to reject the new organ. Well, you are a foreign body part that is being added to the body of Christ and the Spirit is the one who acts like that medicine to ensure that a Holy God will not reject you. The Spirit indwells you and acts to naturalise you to the body of Christ so that you are received as if you were one of Christ's own body parts, which is what you have been made to be.

Think on it, if you had bad health, no money, no friends, no prospects, no freedom, no comforts, but you have the Spirit, all of these things are light and momentary afflictions which will pass and be forgotten in the joy of the life that will be ours one day, a life that we already possess, but will have in a fuller measure when we die, and in its fullness in the new heavens and earth.

The Spirit and the Trinity

One of the tremendous things about the verses we are looking at today is that they give us insight into the interconnectedness of the Trinity. Notice all the interchangeable ways in the which Trinity are mentioned. Paul begins talking about 'the Spirit' who is also the 'Spirit of God' but in the very next sentence is also the 'Spirit of Christ.' Paul speaks about the Spirit dwelling in you but also 'Christ is in you.' We can also highlight that in v11 Paul tells us that the Spirit of the Father raised Jesus but in the gospels Jesus tells us that He takes up His

own life. This sheds light for us on the way the Trinity works in our salvation and the indivisible nature of the Trinity.

As in every act that God does we see the working of all three members of the Godhead in our salvation. The Father sends, the Son is sent, and the Spirit applies the benefits of Christ's work. We can outline distinct functions in the Trinity, for it is always the Father who sends, the Son who executes and the Spirit who applies. However, the three persons indwell each other without denying their individuality or merging it and losing it, their individual persons united to yet distinct from the others. For wherever we find the Father, we find the Son and the Spirit, wherever we have the Son we have the Father and the Spirit, and wherever we have the Spirit there we have the Father and Son as well. This mutual indwelling aspect of the Trinity is mysterious and incomprehensible, it is unlike anything we can ever experience in our own human relations. Each is united to the others and is able to mediate the person of the others without losing their distinct person hood. Here are some examples of what I mean.

Christ says to His disciples that He will not leave them as orphans but will come to them, however, it is the Holy Spirit who is sent. John 14:16-18, '16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.' So who is it, the Spirit or Christ? It is both!

Not only will Christ inhabit His people by the Spirit but the Father will dwell within us as well, John 14:20-23, '20 In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. 21 Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." 22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" 23 Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.' This is not one to the exclusion of the others but all through the one. Language fails to express all that God is and it is our portion to wonder and worship not to understand.

I would also like to draw your attention to the title 'Spirit of Christ.' This is used often enough in the NT but its fullness is not always appreciated. Why is the Spirit called the Spirit of Christ? In part it is because both Father and Son send the Spirit as Jesus tells us in John 15:26, "'But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.' This title also springs from the fact that the Spirit has come to bear witness to Christ, Jn. 15:26. However, there is another aspect which often gets overlooked. When Jesus was baptised the Spirit came upon Him without measure, and all the miracles that He performed to authenticate His identity were enabled by the Spirit. It was this self-same Spirit who resurrected Jesus from the dead and something happened to Jesus humanity when He was resurrected, something unique that is important for His role as the Second Adam, Paul tells us Jesus became a life giving Spirit, 1 Cor. 15:45, 'Thus it is written, "The first man Adam

became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.' This means that Jesus became so changed and transformed by the Spirit at His resurrection that He experienced a new phase in His humanity that now fits Him to be the sender of the Spirit. He came to be so transformed by and in possession of the Spirit that the Spirit who resurrected Him was so identified with what was wrought in Christ's humanity that when Christ sent the Spirit back to earth to the Church it came to affect the very same changes that were wrought in His humanity to ours. The new creation life is now shed abroad in our lives as we become new creations in Christ by participating in His resurrection through the Spirit that unites us and conforms us to Christ. The Spirit that resurrected Christ from death and affected the new creation glory upon Him is the same Spirit that causes us to participate in what has been done to Christ.

These are wonderful and deep things indeed but let us not miss what Paul is seeking to stress, God has made His home in you. The God who could not have sinful Adam and Eve being in His holy Garden and in perpetual fellowship with Him, and so had to kick them out and place a cherubim with a flaming sword to bar the way lest they meet a fate worse than death. It is this God who has so dealt with your sins in Christ, and who now by the Spirit comes to reside within you. The God who dwelt amongst His people in the tabernacle, who would allow no one to enter the holy of holies apart from once a year and that with blood. This God who had to eject His people from the land for their sins exiling them to 70 years in Babylon. It is this God who has given to us the Holy Spirit to dwell within us forever (Jn. 14:16), in a new covenant that can never be broken for Christ has sealed such a covenant for us and has provided so well for our sins that even our future sins cannot cause God to disown us and vacate our hearts as He did the temple and Jerusalem in the OT. We now have access to the throne of grace by the blood of Christ and can penetrate behind the curtain because of Christ. David yearned to dwell in the house of the Lord forever, we have been turned into a very temple.

This is part of why we should feel the need to be holy. Paul argues in this fashion in 1 Cor. 6: 15-20, '15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! 16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." 17 But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. 18 Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.' Honour God with your bodies for the holy ground that He has made it to be by His presence. You have a new and higher purpose in Christ, you are no longer instruments of unrighteousness, you no longer have any obligations to the flesh, so glorify God in your bodies, offer yourselves as living sacrifices for this is your reasonable service.

The Spirit and resurrection

The third way in which we can take assurance from this section is from v11, '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.' Hear the logic. Do you have the Spirit? If so then you will be resurrected from the dead. As certain as Christ is risen from the dead, so certain is your own resurrection because you have the Holy Spirit.

Paul is of course referring to the Holy Spirit as He has been given as a proof, a down payment, the firstfruits and a seal of the inheritance that is ours. The presence of the Spirit, even before He has born witness with our Spirit's that we are God's children, His very presence is grounds for assurance. In Ephesians 1:13-14, '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.' And in 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, 'And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, 22 and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.' The word 'seal' indicates a stamp of ownership. And the word guarantee indicate a first instalment like a deposit that secures a new ownership. The Spirit Himself is this seal and and downpayment, He is proof of ownership and proof that our owner will return for us and finish what He started and take us to our inheritance.

We have already begun to experience a partial resurrection in the new birth that we have received, but we are still in need of the Spirit to renew our bodies and fit our for the new creation when Jesus comes again. We know that He is able for He has proven it in Christ's resurrection; and we know that He will do it for Has already begun the work, we have experienced a resurrection to life but not in body, yet.

The end is certain and it is glorious. We will receive a body just like Christ's. We will have a body that will never taste death again, a body as perfect as His perfect body, a body fit to stand in the presence of a holy God and not be destroyed. Paul says in 1 Cor. 15:48-9, '48 As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.' And having the Spirit is proof that this future is guaranteed.

So then there is only one question to answer, do you have the Spirit? If yes then this is the future that you are destined for, a resurrection like Christ's. If not, then you need to realise that for those who do not have the Spirit, and are not justified by Christ's righteousness, they will stand before God in judgement and instead of eternal joy and reward it will be everlasting punishment in conscious torment. The gift of the Spirit is freely offered to all who will look to Christ as Lord and saviour, who will repent of their sins and trust in Christ's work for them to make them righteous before God. Take it today and this certainty can be yours.

