

Last week, in addition to reading the incredible promise “*there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*” (8:1), we saw the promise of what the Holy Spirit does in our new Christ-lives: “...so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (8:4). Paul now tells us more about how this new life looks.

## Earth or Heaven in Your Hearts (8:5-7)?

### Fleshly Minds (8:5a)

8:5a *For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh...*

- When Paul speaks of “*the flesh*,” he is not primarily speaking of our physical bodies: “The flesh’ is human nature as corrupted, directed, and controlled by sin.”<sup>1</sup> The root of the problem is not in our physical bodies, but in our sin natures. Our sin natures, however, express themselves most clearly in unlawful and undisciplined acts of the body.

### Spiritual Minds (8:5b)

8:5b *...but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.*

- The verb comes from the previous phrase – true believers “*are according to the Spirit*,” and “*set their minds on...the things of the Spirit*.”
- “...we know that the Law is spiritual” (7:14). The Bible calls nothing “*spiritual*” that isn’t of God the Holy Spirit. The moral God of Law is one of “*the things of the Spirit*” that “*those who are according to the Spirit*” have in their focus.

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<sup>1</sup> John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959), 284-285.

## The Dead Mind (8:6a)

8:6a *For the mind set on the flesh is death...*

- **READ Philippians 3:18,19.** A person whose mind is “*set on the flesh*,” or “*on earthly*” things is not a true Christian at all, but is an enemy “*of the cross*.”
- “*Death*” is separation. Separation of Creator from creature (spiritual death), separation of soul from body (physical death), and separation of human from human (relational death).<sup>2</sup> “It is spiritual death, the certain way to eternal death. It is the death of the soul; for it is its alienation from God, in union and communion with Whom the life of the soul consists.”<sup>3</sup>
- This is how Paul described our condition before we were justified by faith in Christ: READ Ephesians 2:1,3.<sup>4</sup>

## The Living, Peaceful Mind (8:6b)

8:6b *...but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace...*

- True “*life*” is to be in right relationship and communion with God our Creator. Jesus said, in His prayer to the Father, “*this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom You have sent*” (John 17:3).
- “...having been justified by faith, **we have peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:1). To be “*justified*” means to be right before God the Judge in this life and in eternity.

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<sup>2</sup> “...your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear” (Isaiah 59:2).

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Henry (1662-1714).

<sup>4</sup> In giving the qualifications for a church-supported widow, Paul writes, “*she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives*” (1 Timothy 5:6).

- When we set our minds on the things of the Spirit, there is the fruit of “*peace*” (Galatians 5:22), which in turn guards our minds: “...*the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 4:7).
- Paul is very concerned with where we “*set our minds.*”
  - “**Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus**” (Philippians 2:5, English Standard Version).
  - “...*if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God*” (Colossians 3:1-3).

### Warfare with God (8:7,8)

*8:7...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, 8:8and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

- To indulge our sinful nature is to be at war with God.<sup>5</sup>
- If not being “*subject...to the law of God*” is a “*mind set on flesh,*” then being “*subject...to the law of God*” is the opposite – a life in the Spirit Who is given to believers in Jesus Christ.

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<sup>5</sup> When God cursed the serpent after the Fall, He gave the first promise of the Gospel: “*And I will put enmity [hostility, warfare] between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel*” (Genesis 3:15). Sadly, the hostility unbelievers show toward God reveals their natural-born allegiance to the serpent.

- If not being “*subject...to the law of God*” describes someone “*in the flesh*” who “*cannot please God,*” then being “*subject...to the law of God*” describes someone “*in the Spirit*” whose actions do please God. God the Holy Spirit does God’s will (His Law) through us as believers in Jesus Christ. For those in Christ, God does in us what He demands of us. This is grace.<sup>6</sup>

### A Personal Reminder of Home (8:9)

#### Mutual Indwelling (8:9a)

*8:9aHowever, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.*

- “...*you...*” Paul is writing this letter to “*the called of Jesus Christ...all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints*” (1:6,7).

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<sup>6</sup> “**Good works are only such as God hath commanded in His Holy Word,** and not such as without the warrant thereof are devised by men out of blind zeal, or upon any pretense of good intentions. These good works, done in obedience to God’s commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith; and by them believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God, Whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus thereunto, that having their fruit unto holiness they may have the end eternal life. Their ability to do good works is not at all of themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ; and that they may be enabled thereunto, besides the graces they have already received, there is necessary an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit, to work in them to will and to do of His good pleasure; yet **they are not hereupon to grow negligent, as if they were not bound to perform any duty, unless upon a special motion of the Spirit, but they ought to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them**” (1689 Baptist Confession, 16.1-3). **Are you?**

- All human beings have both “*flesh*” and “*spirit*,” but Paul is speaking of being either “*in the flesh*” or “*in the Spirit*.” He uses these categories to describe the controlling factor, the obsession, the foundation of a person’s life. We are either controlled by our earthly nature or that which is heavenly in us. To be “*in the flesh*” (7:5; 8:8,9) in these chapters is to be controlled by sinful desires and actions.
- How are we “*in the Spirit*”? “*...if...the Spirit of God dwells in you.*” It is a mutual indwelling. The apostle John says, “*In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins...we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him*” (1 John 4:10,16).
- The Holy Spirit, Who is fully God, the third Person of the one true God, dwells in all believers.<sup>7</sup> We are His dwelling:
  - “*I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you*” (John 14:16,17).
  - “*...through [Christ] we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are...are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and*

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<sup>7</sup> The Holy Spirit is a Person, not a thing or force. He has a will (1 Corinthians 12:11), and can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30). He teaches (John 14:26), bears witness (15:26), convicts (16:8), guides (16:13) and glorifies Christ (16:14). He speaks (1 Timothy 4:14). The Spirit gives birth (John 3:8).

- prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in Whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in Whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit”* (Ephesians 2:18-22).
- “*Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*” (1 Corinthians 3:16; see also 6:19).
  - “*The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit Whom He has given us*” (1 John 3:24).

### **The Spirit and the Christian (8:9b)**

<sup>8:9b</sup> *But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.*

- All of those who genuinely believe in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation have the Holy Spirit.
- The same Spirit Who is “*the Spirit of God*” (8:9a) is also “*the Spirit of Christ*” (8:9b).<sup>8</sup> We have the one God’s Trinitarian dance envisioned here:
  - The Spirit is of both God (“*the Father*,” see 1:7) and Christ. They are one God, but three Persons.<sup>9</sup>

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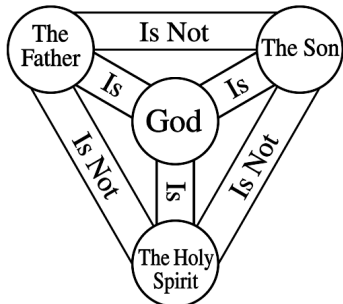
<sup>8</sup> The connection between the Son and Holy Spirit is also seen in Acts 16:7; Philippians 1:19; 1 Peter 1:11.

<sup>9</sup> We know there is a separation of Persons in the one true God because of the instances in the Bible when they are described as being together yet separate. The most famous is Jesus’ baptism (Matthew 3:16,17//Mark 1:10,11//Luke 3:21,22//John 3:32,33), but there are many, many other places in the N.T. where the three Persons of the one true God are seen together. Make a study of this, Church. Know your God as Trinity: Matthew 12:18,28; 28:19; Mark 12:36; Luke 1:35; 2:26; 4:18; 10:21; 24:49; John 3:5,34; 6:62-65;

- The Father is God, but He is not the Son or Spirit.
- The Son is God, but He is not Father or Spirit.
- The Spirit is God, but is not Father or Son.<sup>10</sup>
- Yet these three are one God.
- The Trinity is an important doctrine. It is witnessed in the Bible, and so is important because it is how God has revealed Himself in His Word. It is important because it describes God as radically different in His nature than the false gods of the world (He is not the God of Judaism or Islam, as is all-too-often claimed). It is important because we confess to know this God

14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:5-15; 20:21-22; Acts 1:1-8; 2:17-21,32-33, 38-39; 4:8-10,25-26,29-31; 5:30-32; 7:55-56; 8:14-16; 10:38,44-48; 11:17; 15:7-11; 20:21-23; Romans 1:1-4; 5:1-5; 8:2-3,11,16-17; 1 Corinthians 2:2-5; 6:17-19; 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 1:21,22; 13:14; Galatians 3:1-5,11-14; 4:6; Ephesians 2:18; 3:14-16; 5:18-20; Philippians 3:3; Colossians 1:6-8; 1 Thessalonians 1:3-5; 4:2-8; 5:18,19; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Titus 3:4-6; Hebrews 3:4-7; 6:4-6; 9:14; 10:29-30; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 3:23-24; 4:1-2,13-14; Revelation 1:4; 2:7,26-29; 3:1-2,5-6,12-13,21-22; 5:6-7; 14:12-13; 21:9-10; 22:16-18.

<sup>10</sup> Here’s a way of seeing this:



This is usually called the “Athanasian shield.” Athanasius (A.D. 298-373) defended the biblical doctrine of the Trinity against very popular false teachers in his day who argued that Jesus wasn’t God and the Spirit wasn’t a Person.

we worship and serve – it’d be good to actually know the great mystery He uses to describe Himself. I’ve held onto this verse, spoken in a dire day for God’s people in the world: “...the people who know their God will display strength and take action” (Daniel 11:32). Let’s know Him as He is.

## A Personal Promise of Life (8:10,11)

### Dead Yet Living (8:10)

8:10 *If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.*

- READ 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.
- Christ’s righteousness, credited to our account by faith, is true and eternal life to the believer. It is the power of God in us (READ Romans 1:16,17).

### The Down Payment of Resurrection (8:11)

8:11 *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.*

- Jesus’ resurrection by the power of the Spirit is proof of the coming resurrection of those filled with that same Spirit.
- “So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body...just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Corinthians 15:42-44,49). How then shall we live? “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord” (15:58).