
“Life in the Spirit pt. 3”

ROMANS 8:4-11

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AT A GLANCE

Do you know that if you are in Christ, you have the presence of Christ through His Spirit in you? And because He dwells in you, He gives life! Not only life in eternity, but life here and now!

INTRODUCTION

As we continue in our third week of what will be four weeks looking at this passage, we see that whereas there is death in our flesh, there is life in the Spirit. What does life in the Spirit look like? The Bible tells us a lot about what the Spirit does in and through us. Although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness!

⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹You, 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. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If 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.

THE CORRUPTION OF MAN

What Paul means when he says the **flesh** here is not the physical body. John used the term flesh to describe Jesus' physical body, *“And the Word became flesh...”* *John 1:14*. This is not what Paul means when he uses the term flesh. Flesh is usually a term referring to humanity in its corruption, fallen, and selfish nature; the use in John is an exception. rebellion against God.

Paul wrote in such a way that elicited self-evaluation, but the tone of the whole letter and specifically the tone of Romans 8 lets us know that Paul believed the church in Rome was for the most part composed of those who walk in the Spirit, in whom the Holy Spirit of God dwelt. His use of the conditional clause, **if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you** was meant to comfort, not correct. How could they know they were walking not in the flesh but in the Spirit? How could they be sure their blunders and failures and sins were not counted against them? How could they be sure there was therefore now no condemnation for *them*?

Simple, if one condition is met: the Holy Spirit is in them. Paul does not say that we are in the Spirit if we are virtuous people. He does not say we are in the Spirit if we are benevolent, morally upright, clean-living, hard working, good citizens, or anything else. We are in the Spirit if the Spirit is in us.

NOTHING TO BUILD UPON, WE MUST START FROM SCRATCH

No one can be in the Spirit unless he is born again by the Spirit. This is the message of Jesus in John 3 to the pharisee, Nicodemus. There is nothing good in you, Nicodemus. We have to completely start over. This is true with every single person. Unless you are born again by the Holy Spirit, you are not in the Spirit and you cannot even see the Kingdom of God. Your heart of stone must be replaced with a heart of flesh and that is the work of the Holy Spirit of our God. We call it regeneration.

The conditional clause, **if in fact**, ought to cause us to sincerely evaluate whether we have the Holy Spirit or not because as Paul says in verse 9, **Anyone who does not have the Holy Spirit does not belong to Him**. Anyone who finds they do not have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, ought to turn in repentance and faith and ask forgiveness of sin.

But Paul does not linger there because, again, his presumption is that most of them do in fact have the Spirit in them. Thus, we move to **verse 10** with Paul's incredibly encouraging promise to those in whom the Spirit of God does dwell. **But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.**

CHRIST IN YOU?

Does it seem surprising that Paul begins verse 10 with **if Christ is in you**? In verse 9 he was talking about the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ, that is the Holy Spirit. Now he is talking about Christ in us. This isn't an error on Paul's part. He's not confused. Instead, Paul has highlighted the impenetrable unity of the Trinity and the intimacy they share as the godhead. The Holy Spirit is known as both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ, sent by both of them, and His presence in a believer's life is essentially the presence of Christ in them. They are distinguishable, but so closely related that Paul can go back and forth without hesitation or clarification.

Now let's look at the effect Christ in us has on us. Paul says that if Christ is in you, **although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness**. What does he mean here? This is really a beautiful contradiction. While you are still bound by your mortal body, which is fallen, aging, tired, broken, prone to wander, prone to be pulled back by sinful impulses, dead in terms of the sin nature, "Wretched man that I am!" and while your body will eventually be dead in every sense of the word, there is life in you!

DEAD BECAUSE OF SIN

I think Paul has both senses in mind when he referred to the body being dead because of sin. He had in mind both the physical effect of sin – broken, dying bodies; and the spiritual effect of sin. And I think Paul had in mind both senses of life in the Spirit here in verses 10 and 11. We eagerly await the full consummation of our salvation when our physical bodies are resurrected as glorious bodies, completely free of sin and completely free of death, perfect in every way. We'll return to that concept next week in the final part of Life in the Spirit in verse 11.

Today let's look at what the Spirit of life does within us, even within our bodies of death. Paul says **the Spirit is life because of righteousness**.

MORE TO LIFE

What is **life**? We're talking about more than the biological functions of a human body. There is more to life than physical functioning of the body. You get that, right? There's more to life. There's so much more to life. But so few people find it. So many people go through life chasing something more, never finding it. Chasing it to the bottom of a bottle, working themselves ragged, amusing

themselves to delirium. Turn the radio to any secular radio station and you'll hear endless tales of someone desperately trying to find real life.

Let's consider what the Bible says about what the Holy Spirit does in us to get a better sense of what Paul means here by **life**. The first thing the Holy Spirit does in a person is convict of sin. Jesus said in *John 16:8*, "*And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment...*"

CONVICTION OF SIN

When a person is born-again by the Spirit, the very first thing they experience is a deep sense that they have grieved our Holy God. They experience a profound realization that what we call sin really is an affront to God. What they have tolerated their whole lives is reprehensible to God. They are simultaneously filled with grateful relief knowing that in coming to this place of spiritual life, of believing the Gospel, they have been spared of God's wrath and they have been washed clean. There is a feeling of instant relief from the guilt, shame, and death of sin. So we can say that life in the Spirit is a conscience that has been washed clean.

REMINDER OF FAMILY STATUS

At the same time as we're washed clean, we're adopted as children of God. The Spirit fosters that relationship between you and God the Father. "*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!'*" *Romans 8:15* And He keeps reminding you of who you are, "*The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.*" *Romans 8:16*

ONGOING SANCTIFICATION

He also keeps convicting us of sin. He continues the work of sanctification by convicting us of sin on a more nuanced level as we grow in Christlikeness. "*And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*" *2 Corinthians 3:18*

The more closely we walk with the Spirit, the more we understand the character of Jesus and the more convicted we become of our sin. But we don't dwell there navel-gazing. We don't walk through life feeling "woe is me!" We see Jesus' holiness and we see our sin. Then we look again to Jesus and He reminds us that we fight from victory, not for victory; that in Christ there is no condemnation and His Spirit He empowers us to live victorious lives. "*For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.*" *1 John 5:4*

"*But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" *1 Corinthians 15:57* Spiritually, we have victory through faith in Jesus. Practically, how does He give us victory? "*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*" *Galatians 5:16*

Life in the Spirit is a life that is growing in holiness, righteousness, the fruit of the Spirit is growing in you. You are becoming more like Jesus in character and behavior. The sins that once controlled you are fading in strength and the Lord is bringing to your awareness finer and finer sins and you are responding with greater and greater humility and sincerity knowing what the Spirit reveals is true because as Jesus said, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth..." *John 16:13* We come to recognize our sin because the Spirit has shown it to us. But as we grow, we come to discern sin before we've given in to it. We grow in discernment and understanding and discipline to fight our flesh.

GUIDE TO THE TRUTH

The Spirit of God will never tell you anything that contradicts the Word of God. Instead, He uses the Word that He Himself inspired to instruct us and shape us. *“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17*

Thus life in the Spirit reflects a greater knowledge of, appreciation for, and submission to the Word of God. It is also a life of spiritual power. The Spirit gives us gifts to use for God’s glory and the edification of the church.

“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom...utterance of knowledge...faith...gifts of healing...the working of miracles...prophecy...the ability to distinguish between spirits...various kinds of tongues...the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.” 1 Corinthians 12:7-11

SUPPLIER OF POWER

Regardless of what gift the Holy Spirit gives you, He gives us all the power to be Christ’s witnesses to a hurting and dying world. *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8*

Life in the Spirit is a life that is empowered and emboldened to make Jesus known to the nations to the glory of God. This is why our vision is that every member would see themselves as a missionary. Equipped here and sent there. Wherever “there” is.

Jesus called the Holy Spirit our “helper” in John 14:26. Paul says that He helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us. *“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.” Romans 8:26*

Life in the Spirit is life that depends upon the Spirit, that goes to Him with our needs and our pains and our struggles. It is recognizing as with Job that everything about our life depends upon Him, *“If he should set his heart to it and gather to himself his spirit and his breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.” Job 34:14-15*

BECAUSE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

As we close, what does Paul mean by the Spirit is life **because of righteousness**? Whose righteousness? Paul said in *Romans 3:10*, *“None is righteous, no not one.”* So it’s not my righteousness that gives life and it’s not your righteousness. It’s not your spouse’s. It’s not your parents’. It’s not your kids’.

In the greatest exchange of all time, Christ took your sin upon Himself and gave you His righteousness. *“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” 2 Corinthians 5:21*

You cannot find life in your own righteousness. You can’t find life in works. You can’t find life in wealth. You can’t find life in a bottle, be it a pill bottle or a whiskey bottle, or a glass pipe or a carton of cigarettes. You can’t find life in a casserole, or a bible study, or a golf cart, or a fishing boat. You can’t find life in entertainment or porn or TV. You can’t find life in nature. And you can’t even find life in family. At least, not real **life**. You might find escape or relief or pleasure or even purpose, but those are fleeting. You might find something that numbs you or distracts you, but that’s not life. All of this will come to an end at some point. And then what?

No *one* and no *thing* can give you life except the Spirit of life. And that life comes **because of righteousness**, the righteousness of Christ. His righteousness is bestowed upon you through faith in Him.

Jesus is the way, the truth, and *the life*. Abide in Christ and you will live.

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