

In discussing the two determining realities of flesh and Spirit, Paul first considered those who are “according to the flesh” (8:5-8). Only then did he turn his attention to his Roman readers as those who are “according to the Spirit” (8:9-13). For its part, this latter passage consists of two discrete contexts, with the first being oriented toward the believer’s new status (8:9-11), and the second his practical obligation by virtue of it (8:12-13). In fact, verse 8:13 is Paul’s first mention of the believer’s personal responsibility since he last addressed it in chapter six. His language of flesh/Spirit and life/death pertains not to how the believer conducts himself, but what defines him as a new creation in Christ. It was not until he had firmly established that critical foundation that Paul was ready to address the Christian’s responsibility to “live into” his new identity as a “man of the Spirit.”

- a. Paul’s intention to shift his attention from the fleshly man to the man of the Spirit is revealed first by his conjunction rendered “however” (NASB). It is commonly translated as either *and* or *but*, but is always used where the writer intends to show contrast between two entities or ideas. Here the obvious point of contrast is between those who are determined by the flesh and those who are determined by the Spirit: “*However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit...*” (8:9a).

As indicated above, Paul presents this contrast as existing between mutually exclusive realities. Every person is determined either by the flesh or by the Spirit, but not by both. Paul shows this in two ways:

- 1) The first is by using another adversative conjunction to join together the two ideas of flesh and Spirit: “not in the flesh **but** in the Spirit.”
- 2) The second is by spotlighting the Roman believers (and by extension all believers; note 8:9b) in distinction from those “in the flesh” as described in 8:5-8. Paul accomplished this by employing the emphatic pronoun *you* in his opening statement. In this way he effectively distinguished and isolated his Roman readers from his previous description. Thus Paul’s point in this transition:

Those who are according to the flesh are governed by the flesh, with the result that they live hostile and displeasing lives in relation to God. But you, Romans, are not in the flesh because you are now in the Spirit. And being in the Spirit means that the “death” that was your innate hostility toward God and your estrangement from Him has been overcome and replaced with the “life” that is peace and intimate communion with Him by the indwelling presence of His Spirit.

In Paul’s theology of the Christian life, to be “in the Spirit” is to live in the realm in which the Spirit’s power determines and governs one’s existence. Moreover, Paul insists that this realm is the existential domain of every true believer. But because the goal of the Spirit’s governance is personal transformation, He governs the believer by indwelling him. Therefore, to be “in the Spirit” implies the indwelling presence of the Spirit as well as the governing exercise of His power.

- b. The first clause of verse 8:9 states the fact of the Romans' distinction from those who are still "in the flesh" (cf. 8:8), and the second clause provides the basis for this distinction. These clauses make up the first in a series of four conditional statements upon which this passage is constructed (ref. 8:9a, 8:9b, 8:10, 8:11). A conditional statement most often takes the form of an "if/then" sentence. But regardless of specific form, it always presents one assertion whose truth or fulfillment stands as the consequence of the truth or fulfillment of a second assertion. If the one is true – *and only if the one is true* – then the other is also.

In this instance Paul provided the consequence first, namely the reality of no longer being in the flesh. The condition upon which the consequence stands is given second: "*if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.*" The significance of Paul's statement must not be missed: the criterion for being delivered from the domain and governance of the flesh is not doctrinal knowledge, personal resolve, moral rectitude, or religious piety; *it is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.* Moreover, Paul's language indicates that this criterion is both singular and essential. That is to say, deliverance from the dominion of the flesh ("death") comes only as a result of the presence of the Spirit in the soul. Only the "Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" can set a person free from "the law of sin and death."

- c. This becomes more obvious with Paul's next statement (8:9b). It, too, is introduced with the same contrasting conjunction and is formed as a conditional sentence: "*But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.*" Deliverance from the flesh depends upon the indwelling presence of the Spirit, and the Spirit is "poured out" into the hearts of men on the basis of their being justified by faith in Christ (ref. 5:1-8). But the sinner's justification is also inseparable from his *personal union* with Christ (6:1-11, 7:1-6); he has died to sin and lives by the Spirit precisely because he shares in Christ's death and life.

Thus Paul could assign "belonging to Christ" as a consequence that stands upon the prior condition of being indwelt by the Spirit: *if - and only if - a person has the Spirit does he truly belong to Christ.* This is Paul's point, though he chose to express it negatively: every person who is not indwelt by the Spirit does not belong to Christ. And although Paul's statement leaves room for the logical possibility that men could have the Spirit and *not* belong to Christ (he only insisted that they cannot belong to Him *without* the Spirit), his larger argument in the epistle eliminates this possibility. For the Spirit is bestowed upon a person by virtue of his personal justification, and his justification stands upon his participation in Christ's death and resurrection life. What this means is that a person cannot have the Spirit and not belong to Christ as one joined to Him.

This fact is all the more evident from Paul's reference to the Spirit as the *Spirit of Christ*. No sooner did Paul refer to Him as the Spirit of *God* than he designated Him the Spirit of *Christ*. In doing so Paul was not in any way denying distinction within the Trinity. Nor was he arguing for the deity of Jesus Christ. Rather, his point was that the Holy Spirit mediates Christ to the Christian.

Paul could rightly refer to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ because He represents Christ's ongoing, metaphysical presence with His people:

- He is the One who leads them into all truth by taking what belongs to Christ and giving it to them (John 16:12-15);
- He is the One who forms Christ's life in them and perfects in them Christ's likeness (cf. 8:29 with 2 Corinthians 3:17-18);
- He is the One who imparts to them and cultivates in them Christ's mind (1 Corinthians 2:1-16).

The indwelling Spirit is the fulfillment of Jesus' promise that He would not leave His own as orphans, but that He would come to them (John 14:16-18).

- d. That the Holy Spirit represents the metaphysical presence of Christ with His people is made undeniable by Paul in verse 8:10. For the indwelling Spirit of God in 8:9a is referred to as the Spirit of Christ in 8:9b, and then finally as Christ's own indwelling presence: "*And if **Christ** is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.*"

For the third time Paul presents his argument in terms of a conditional statement. In this instance, the "if" clause (*protasis*) is the fact of Christ's presence in the believer. And as the "then" clause (*apodosis*) follows the protasis as a necessary consequence, so the consequence of Christ's indwelling presence is a spirit that is alive because of righteousness. Two observations need to be made in this regard:

- 1) The first concerns Paul's use of the word *spirit*. Some have understood him to be referring to the Holy Spirit because of the contextual emphasis upon Him and His work. However, the contrast Paul drew between spirit and body leads to the conclusion that he was speaking of the immaterial human spirit in distinction from the physical body.
- 2) The second observation pertains to Paul's statement that the spirit is *alive because of righteousness*. This, too, has been subject to various interpretations, but when it is considered within the overall context its meaning becomes clear. At bottom, Paul was simply acknowledging that the indwelling of the Spirit presupposes justification. As already noted, the believer's justification stands upon his participation in Christ's death and resurrection. Those who are justified have died with Jesus and been raised to newness of life in Him (6:1-11; cf. also Galatians 2:20). This life, in turn, is imparted by the indwelling Spirit whom Christ gives as a permanent endowment to believers (Ephesians 1:13-14). They receive His Spirit as the proof of their justification, and this justification is the reckoning of Christ's righteousness to them. Thus Paul could affirm that the spirit of the Christian is alive on account of righteousness.

With this understanding it is unnecessary to determine whether Paul had in mind the righteousness of Christ or the believer. The grammar would seem to indicate the former, but either way the same truth emerges. For the believer's righteousness *is* Christ's righteousness, so that, while it may be said in one sense that the Christian's spirit is alive on account of his personal righteousness, his righteousness is simply his share in Christ's righteousness by virtue of his union with Him. In the final analysis, all that the believer is he is *in Christ* (2 Corinthians 1:19-20; Ephesians 1:1-2:10; Colossians 1:9-28).

Verse 10 presents the third of four sequential conditional statements, but it differs from the others in that it introduces an additional clause to the structure. From a purely grammatical standpoint, this clause constitutes the second part of a compound apodosis. In other words, Paul's "then" statement in this verse has two discrete parts, one of which pertains to the *body* and the other to the *spirit*. These clauses are parallel in structure and content, and they both reflect back on the one "if" statement by which Paul begins the verse.

However, both clauses do not stand in relation to the protasis in the same way: the "spirit" clause alone functions as the formal apodosis of the conditional sentence, for it stands as a consequence of the fulfillment of the protasis whereas the "body" clause does not. In other words, Christ's indwelling presence in a person necessarily implies the life of his spirit, but it doesn't imply the death of his body.

- Every person – Christian or otherwise – has a body that is "dead because of sin." The reality of the body's deadness does not *presuppose* the reality of "Christ in you," as is the case with the life of the spirit.
- On the other hand, Paul importantly observes here that Christ's indwelling presence *does not put an end* to the deadness of the body. It brings a person's spirit to life, but his body is left unregenerated.

These truths lead to the conclusion that the "body" clause is best viewed as *concessive*. This being the case, it is appropriately introduced with the conjunction *though* or *although* as found in many English versions. Paul's point is that Christ's indwelling Spirit gives life to a person's spirit in spite of the fact that the body continues in its mortal and corrupted state.

- e. This meaning is proven out by verse 8:11, for in it Paul indicated to the Romans that the ongoing, corrupt mortality of their physical bodies would itself ultimately be taken up and transformed in accordance with God's eternal purpose and the all-encompassing power of Christ's redemption:

"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 indwells you."

This is the last of Paul's four conditional statements, and it addresses God's great promise in view of which the believer lives out his present existence "in the Spirit." For, although the Christian has entered Christ's eschatological kingdom and even now enjoys the principles of renewal and life that mark that kingdom, he yet inhabits it according to the reality of "already but not yet." By His redemptive work Jesus has inaugurated in substance the long-promised kingdom, but it has not yet been brought to its consummated fullness. Like the mustard seed and the leavened lump of dough, it is growing and maturing toward the day when it will reach its consummation at Christ's return (Matthew 13:31-33; cf. also 24:27-25:46; Luke 13:18-30, 22:14-18; Ephesians 1:7-10; 1 Corinthians 15:12-28).

Thus the kingdom of Christ in this age is characterized by *hope*; it embodies present transformation that confidently anticipates final perfection. The Christian stands renewed – alive from the dead – and the Spirit is methodically transforming him into Christ's likeness "from glory to glory." But he continues on in his physical mortality, still subjected to the curse that rests upon it. In this way he is constrained to live in hope. Yet Paul has already insisted that Christian hope *does not disappoint*, and this truth is reinforced here. For even while the believer struggles within his corrupt mortality, he is aware that his inner man is being renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:1-18), *and the redemptive power that is effecting that renewal is the same power that will one day clothe him with immortality and incorruption* (1 Corinthians 15:35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:1-8).

The Christian's new life results from his participation in Christ's death and resurrection. At the present time this life is confined to his spirit, but the One who raised Jesus from the dead raised Jesus' *body* as well as His spirit. And so Christ's physical resurrection life is the promise of the believer's bodily resurrection: "*As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming.*"

The fact of Christ's resurrection is the sure hope of all who join themselves to Him in faith. Because He has been raised, they, too, shall be raised. In terms of the principle of life that is realized in the deliverance from sin and death, they have already been raised with Christ (cf. again 6:1-11, 7:1-6, 8:1-2). And this fact is not left to their own speculation; it is attested by Christ's enduring gift of the indwelling Spirit. He is poured into the hearts of all those who belong to Jesus, so that His presence in the soul is the irrefutable evidence of new life.

But His indwelling presence is also the guarantee of future glory. He is called by Paul the *Holy Spirit of promise*, for He is the "pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:13-14). With all the confidence befitting a triune, sovereign salvation, Paul could proclaim without doubt or shame: "*He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.*" For this reason the Christian lives in steadfast hope, waiting along with the entire creation for the fullness of the glory of the children of God.