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DO YOU BELONG TO CHRIST?

Romans 8:9-11

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Romans Lesson 45

Do You Belong to Christ? Romans 8:9-11

The most important question that you ever need to answer is, "Do I belong to Christ?" If you belong to Christ, all of God's promises are "yes" for you in Him (2 Cor. 1:20). If you belong to Christ, you are reconciled to God, your sins are all forgiven, you can enjoy fellowship with Him every day, and you know that if you were to die today, you would be with the Lord in the glory of heaven forever.

So, do you belong to Christ? You may say, "Yes, I invited Jesus into my heart at Vacation Bible School when I was a child." I'm glad to hear that, but do you belong to Christ? "Yes, I prayed the sinner's prayer after a campus worker shared the Four Spiritual Laws with me in college." That's fine, but do you belong to Christ? "Yes, the worker told me that if I prayed that prayer, I could be assured that I'm going to heaven." Really? Where does the Bible say that praying a prayer will get you into heaven? You need to make sure that you belong to Christ based on what the Bible says.

One of Paul's main reasons for writing Romans 8 was to give assurance to us who believe in Jesus Christ that we belong to Him for time and eternity. He begins with the most wonderful statement imaginable (Rom. 8:1), "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Then he explains (8:2), "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death." The new life that the Holy Spirit imparts frees you from the condemnation that resulted from your sin. Jesus, God's eternal Son, bore the penalty that the law demanded, so that its requirement of perfect righteousness is met in Him (8:3-4a). This is what Paul has earlier called "justification."

Then Paul describes those who have been justified (8:4b): [they] "do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." He goes on to describe this contrast further. Those who have not been justified are "according to the flesh" (8:5a). They "set their minds on the things of the flesh." Those who have been justified are "according to the Spirit." They "set their minds on the

things of the Spirit.” He explains further why this is so (8:6): “For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.” Those who have not been justified are in a state of spiritual death or separation from God. Those who have been justified enjoy new life (from the Spirit of life, 8:2) and peace with God.

Then (8:7-8) he explains further the unbelieving mind, which is set on the flesh: It “is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” Those in the flesh are spiritually incapable even of trusting in Christ for salvation because of their innate rebellion against Him. For them to be saved, God’s Spirit must raise them from spiritual death to life.

Now (8:9-11), Paul turns to those who have experienced the new birth and explains (8:9), “However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.” But perhaps you are concerned for a loved one who died or troubled over the inevitable fact that you are going to die. Does this mean that you do not have new life in Christ? No, Paul goes on to explain (8:10) that although your physical body will die, the Spirit has given you life because you are righteous in Christ. And, although your body will die, the same God who raised Jesus from the dead will one day resurrect your mortal body through His Spirit who dwells in you (8:11). But, all of this depends on the matter, “Do you belong to Christ?” Paul is saying:

If God’s Spirit dwells in you, you belong to Christ;
and though your physical body will die,
God will raise your body from the dead.

When we trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, we changed realms from living “according to the flesh” to living “according to the Spirit.” We used to be “in the flesh,” living under its ruling influence. Now we live “in the Spirit,” under His rule and the Spirit lives in us.

1. You are in the Spirit if the Spirit of God dwells in you, which is a mark of everyone who belongs to Christ (8:9).

C. H. Spurgeon (*Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* [Pilgrim Publications], 19:529) calls verse 9 “one of the most solemn texts in the

whole Bible.” He says, “It is so sweeping: it deals with us all.... And it deals with the most important point about us, for to belong to Christ is the most essential thing for time and eternity.” Thus,

- A. It is absolutely vital to have the Spirit of God dwelling in you, because if you do not, you do not belong to Christ.

As we have seen, Paul divides all people into just two categories: Those who are “in the flesh” and those “in the Spirit.” There is no category for so-called “carnal” Christians, who claim that Jesus is their Savior, but not their Lord. While the process of bringing every area of life under the lordship of Christ is lifelong, *every* true Christian is involved in that process. If the direction of your life is not, “Jesus, You are my Lord and I submit all of myself that I am aware of to You,” then you are not a Christian in the vital sense of that word. You are in the flesh, hostile toward God, and not subject to His Word (8:7).

Being a Christian is not a matter of going to church or believing certain doctrines of the Christian faith or trying to live by certain moral standards. Of course, true Christians do all of those things, but the vital thing is that the Holy Spirit has caused you to be born again. Jesus said this very plainly to Nicodemus, a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews. Talk about going to church—this man went to the temple to pray several times a day. He *never* skipped a religious observance to go fishing! Talk about believing in certain doctrines—he had memorized large portions of the Hebrew Scriptures. Talk about morality—this man was scrupulous about keeping the Ten Commandments.

But Jesus’ opening words to him were (John 3:3), “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” He went on to say (John 3:7), “Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’” Peter spoke of the same thing (1 Pet. 1:3): “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (see, also James 1:18; Titus 3:4-6). So when we are born again, the Holy Spirit imparts new life to us and takes up residence in us. Thus it is a matter of spiritual life or death to have the Spirit of God dwelling in you or not.

Some Pentecostal groups teach that you must receive the Holy Spirit subsequent to salvation. They base this on a misinterpretation of Acts 19:2, where Paul encounters some disciples of John the Baptist and asks, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" When they reply no, Paul explains some things, prays for them, and they receive the Holy Spirit. But it's important to understand that Acts is a transitional book from the age of the Law, when the Spirit was only given to some and could be withdrawn (Ps. 51:11) to the age of the promised Holy Spirit, who permanently indwells all who are born again (John 7:39; 14:17; 1 Cor. 12:13). Romans 8:9 makes it clear that if you have been born again, you have the Holy Spirit dwelling in you. If you don't have the Spirit, you do not belong to Christ.

This does not mean that we should not ask for a deeper experience of the Spirit's presence and power. We must yield more and more of ourselves to the Spirit's control as we become aware of areas that we have not given to Him. We are commanded to walk by means of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16) and to be filled with (or controlled by) the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). But if you have been born again and your trust is in Christ as Savior and Lord, you do not need to receive the Holy Spirit. He dwells in every believer.

Paul states it negatively (8:9b), "But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him." Think about the opposite: If you have the Spirit, you *do* belong to Christ. He bought you with His blood. You are not your own; you are His slave. In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Paul also combines the idea of the indwelling Holy Spirit and belonging to Christ: "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body."

I can't help but think that the church would be very different if everyone would live daily in the reality of the truth, "I am not my own; I now belong to Christ." My *tongue* is not my own to use to yell at my family when I'm upset. I must use it to glorify Christ. My *eyes* are not my own, to look lustfully at women. I must use my eyes to glorify Christ. My *money* is not my own to use as I please. I must use it to glorify Christ. My *time* is not my own to squander on frivolous pursuits. I need to use it to serve and glorify Christ. It's a life-

transforming principle! The mark of being a Christian is, the Spirit dwells in you and you now belong to Christ.

By the way, note how Paul interchanges terms in these verses. The Holy Spirit is called “the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (8:2) because He imparts new life to us in Christ. In 8:9 He is called “the Spirit of God,” indicating that He is God and that He carries out God’s purposes. He is called “the Spirit of Christ” because Christ sent Him to the church when He returned to the Father. His role is to glorify Christ (John 16:14). When He was on the earth, Jesus lived in the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1). He is also called “the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead” (8:11) to emphasize that if He dwells in us, God will through the Spirit resurrect our bodies.

Also, Paul moves easily from the Spirit dwelling in us to Christ dwelling in us. Douglas Moo (*The Epistle to the Romans* [Eerdmans], p. 491) explains, “What this means is not that Christ and the Spirit are equated or interchangeable, but that Christ and the Spirit are so closely related in communicating to believers the benefits of salvation that Paul can move from one to the other almost unconsciously.” Thomas Schreiner points out (*Romans* [Baker], p. 414), “Texts like these provided the raw materials from which the church later hammered out the doctrine of the Trinity.”

Thus it is absolutely vital to have the Spirit of God dwelling in you, because if you do not, you do not belong to Christ. But how can you know whether or not the Spirit indwells you? Is it a warm feeling inside of you or a tingling sensation? A woman once told me that she knew that the Spirit was in our church because when she came in the building her hands tingled. I wanted to suggest that she get a check-up with a neurologist!

- B. There are distinguishing marks by which you can tell if the Spirit dwells in you.

After speaking to Nicodemus about the new birth, Jesus drew an analogy between the effects of the wind and the effects of the Holy Spirit. We can’t see the wind, but we can see its effects. When a piece of paper blows by, you do not assume that it is flying on its own like a bird. You assume that the wind is blowing it. So it is with the Spirit. You can’t see the Spirit, but you can see His effects.

In Romans 8, Paul shows a number of things that the Spirit does. He sets you free from the law of sin and of death (8:2). He gives new life and peace with God (8:6). The Spirit will raise our mortal bodies (8:11); He enables us to kill our sin (8:13); testifies to us that we are God's children (8:16); and, helps us to pray (8:26). And, by way of implied contrast (8:7-8), the Spirit reconciles us to God and enables us to submit to His Word and to please Him.

I can't comment much and this list is not comprehensive, but here is one negative and nine positive marks by which you can tell if the Spirit dwells in you:

- (1) Speaking in tongues is *not* a sign that the Spirit dwells in you.

I must point this out because some Pentecostal denominations claim that speaking in tongues is the sign that you have the Holy Spirit. But this is contrary to Paul's statement that all do not have the gift of tongues (1 Cor. 12:30). It's debatable whether or not the gift of tongues is valid for today. But if it is valid, it must be translatable language, not babble. You cannot interpret or translate babble. It's just nonsense syllables. Language has definable structure and vocabulary. The biblical gift of tongues is the miraculous ability to speak in a language that you have not learned so that a speaker of that language could understand you. But most of what is called tongues today is just nonsense syllables. Non-Christians have experienced the same phenomena, obviously without the power of the Holy Spirit. Positively,

- (2) If the Spirit dwells in you, you have experienced the new birth.

You may not remember the exact time or place, but you know that the Spirit of God has changed your heart from being a God-hater to being a God-lover. He changed you from trusting in your own good works to trusting in Christ alone.

- (3) If the Spirit dwells in you, you are drawn to Jesus Christ and you desire to know and honor Him (John 16:14-15; Eph. 3:16-17).
- (4) If the Spirit dwells in you, you have been flooded with God's love so that you have hope in Him (Rom. 5:5; 15:13).

- (5) If the Spirit dwells in you, you regard Scripture as His Word of truth and you are growing to understand it.

Jesus calls Him “the Spirit of truth” (John 14:17; 15:26). He inspired the writers of Scripture (2 Pet. 1:21; 2 Tim. 3:16). He helps us to understand the many riches that God gives us through the written Word (1 Cor. 2:10-16).

- (6) If the Spirit dwells in you, His fruit is growing in your life and the deeds of the flesh are diminishing.

Fruit takes time, but it should be evident that you are growing in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).

- (7) If the Spirit dwells in you, you will have a growing hatred of sin and love of holiness.

He is the *Holy* Spirit. He works to make us holy (set apart from this evil world), beginning on the thought level (1 Cor. 6:11, 19; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 14:17; 1 Thess. 4:7-8).

- (8) If the Spirit dwells in you, you will be growing in praise, joy, and thankfulness toward God (Luke 1:67ff; 2:26-32; 10:21; Acts 13:52; Eph. 5:18-20; Phil. 3:3).

- (9) If the Spirit dwells in you, you will be growing in prayer (Rom. 8:26; Eph. 6:18; Jude 20).

- (10) If the Spirit dwells in you, you will tell others about Christ.

Acts 1:8: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses....” The Book of Acts is the story of the early church bearing witness of Jesus and the resurrection through the Spirit’s power.

So the point of verse 9 is, if you belong to Christ, you have the Holy Spirit indwelling you. But, if He is the Spirit of life (8:2), then why do believers die?

2. We who are in the Spirit are still subject to physical death, even though the Spirit has given us life (8:10).

Romans 8:10: “And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.”

By "body," Paul means the physical body. "Dead because of sin" means that our bodies are still under the curse of death as a result of the fall (5:12; 6:23). We all die physically because Adam sinned. Death remains as the penalty on the human race until Christ's work is consummated (Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 15:26).

Commentators and translators are divided over whether "spirit" refers to the human spirit (NASB) or to the Holy Spirit (ESV, NIV, NKJV). (The original Greek did not use capital letters.) It's difficult to decide, as there are good arguments for both. If it refers to the human spirit, the sense is, your spirit is alive because you are righteous in Christ. This seems to complement the contrast with the dead human body. But the word Paul uses is not "alive," but "life." This fits better with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of life (8:2). The sense then would be, as Thomas Schreiner explains (p. 415), "The presence of the Spirit demonstrates that believers will not be saddled with their weak and corruptible bodies forever. The Spirit is a life-giving Spirit and will overcome death through the resurrection of the body." The reason that the Spirit is life to us is that we are righteous in Christ through justification.

3. We who are in the Spirit have the promise that He who raised Jesus from the dead will also resurrect our mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in us (8:11).

The instant we die physically, our spirit goes to be with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:6-8; Luke 23:43), while our bodies decompose. But the instant Jesus returns, God will give us new resurrection bodies, which will be suited for the new heavens and earth, in which righteousness dwells (2 Pet. 3:13; 1 Cor. 15:12-57).

Jesus is the prototype. His resurrection body is a physical body, but it is not subject to disease or death. The God who raised Jesus from the dead (Eph. 1:19-20) will also raise our bodies from the grave at the moment that Jesus returns (1 Cor. 15:50-57). Whether a person was burned at the stake, died at sea and was eaten by sharks, was blown to bits by an explosion, or decomposed in a grave, God will resurrect those bodies in a recognizable but new, indestructible body. And so we shall always be with the Lord.

Conclusion

In 1986, I was preaching through 1 Corinthians and I came to 15:19: "If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied." That verse jarred me. I asked myself, "Is that true of me? Can I say that if there is no heaven, you should feel sorry for the stupid way that I'm living my life?" I live in America and enjoy a very comfortable lifestyle. I have a wonderful wife. At that time, my children were still at home and a great source of joy for me. Now they've given me the joy of ten grandchildren. But that verse caused me to put my focus more on heaven.

Without Christ, life is grim and futile. As the bumper sticker says, "Life is tough and then you die." Even if you make it to 100, so what? But if you belong to Christ, no matter when you die you have the certain hope that the God who raised Jesus from the dead will raise you through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Near the end of his life, D. L. Moody said, "Soon you will read in the newspaper that I am dead. Don't believe it for a moment. I will be more alive than ever before" (cited by Randy Alcorn, *Heaven* [Tyndale], p. 31). And so I can't urge you strongly enough to make sure you can answer "yes" to the question, "Do you belong to Christ?"

Application Questions

1. Why is it important to affirm that every Christian has the indwelling Holy Spirit? Why is it also important to affirm that every Christian should seek to experience more of the Spirit's power?
2. How would you respond (biblically) to a person who said that if you have not spoken in tongues, you do not have the Holy Spirit?
3. How (practically) can we develop a greater desire for heaven?
4. Which marks of the Spirit are most evident in your life? Which need more attention?

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