

ROMANS AND THE FLESH VS. THE SPIRIT

One of the principles of the book of Romans that should jump out at us is that it is unfolding **the foundations of the Christian life**. Hebrews 6:1-3 are the foundations of the doctrines of Christ. HEB 5:12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to **teach you the elementary principles** of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. HEB 6:1 Therefore **leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ**, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, HEB 6:2 of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. HEB 6:3 And this we shall do, if God permits.

Romans 5-6-7-8 must be much more than doctrines to learn. These principles must produce “LIFE EXPERIENCES” in us. Death, burial and resurrection must be much more than a doctrine about Christ. These are speaking about a personal experience “in Christ”. There is a spiritual reality of being personally included in Christ when He was crucified, when He died, when He was buried, when He resurrected, when He ascended and when He was seated at the right hand of the Father. EPH 2:6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly {places}, in Christ Jesus,

From God’s side we are already included “in Christ” in all these things. From our side we must now include ourselves “in Christ” in each aspect of Christ’s experience. It is clear that Paul is not speaking hypothetically about these things but is relating the reality of the Christian life. Pretending that we were in Christ on Calvary is not the same as knowing we died when He died and we were buried when He was buried and we resurrected when He was resurrected. Paul is not speaking about a theory that he has developed but of the reality of the provision of Calvary. These vital experiences are the foundation of the Christian life and the basis of ministry.

If we respond to the truths of the book of Romans by saying “ O.K. I will pretend that I died with Christ, but I know I am still living” we will continue to just live in the flesh. Sin, sins, death, in Adam, the world, and in bondage to the law all are handled by being included in Christ in these experiences of death, burial, resurrection and ascension.

Paul asks the question “Shall we continue to sin after we are forgiven?” We could also ask the question “Are we to continue to walk in the flesh after we have died, been buried, been resurrected and been ascended with Christ?” We could also ask “ Should we continue to walk in the flesh after God has given us a new spirit and filled us with the Holy Spirit?” The answer is “May it never be. That is as ridiculous as continuing to live in sin after we are redeemed.”

ROM 6:11 Even so **consider** (RECKON) yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Consider here is a very weak word to translate Paul’s thought. It is like saying “ Think on this”. The word he uses has to do with mathematical calculations. For example: We can reckon on the fact that $2 \times 2 = 4$ any place in the world, at any time. It is a mathematical fact that never

changes. It is used in ROM 4:3 For what does the Scripture say? “And Abraham believed God, and it was **reckoned** to him as righteousness.” God calculates faith as righteousness. This is God’s evaluation and is an eternal fact. We also can calculate or reckon on that fact. This fact doesn’t vary from person to person and change from time to time.

In ROM 6:11 we could paraphrase; Even so (it is an established fact, and you can count on it, that

you are) dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus (from God's viewpoint). The way we participate in this eternal fact is to "reckon" on that fact as our personal experience. God has included us "in Christ", now we must include ourselves. If we reckon on our death, burial and resurrection to be something yet in the future, we cannot participate in the benefit now. For example: If we reckon that someday Christ will die for my sin, I cannot now be saved. I must reckon that 2000 years ago Christ died for my sins. I enter into that benefit by faith that His shed blood included me. Then I also reckon that I was included in His death, burial and resurrection. It is the same category but a different dimension that provides for our deliverance.

It should be clear that death and burial is not the goal but resurrection into a different kind of "LIFE" (ZOE). ROM 6:4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in **newness of life**. This is not a modification of the old life but is a whole new life that is of a different kind, quality and dimension.

If we are reckoning on a "reformed old life" we miss what resurrection has provided for us. God is not reforming but He is imparting something new that we never had before. This "LIFE" is the very life of Christ. JOH 1:4 **In Him was life**, and the life was the light of men. JOH 1:9 There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. All who receive Christ must receive Him as their "LIFE".

This new "resurrection life of Christ" is the source of the Christian life. The Christian functions out of this resurrection life and not out of a reformed "old life". This is the difference between the flesh and the Spirit. Man, in himself, will function merely as flesh. 1CO 3:3 for you **are still fleshly**. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and **are you not walking like mere men?** Flesh is man functioning out of the old natural life. The Spirit operates out of and through the new "LIFE" of Christ. This is such a simple matter but is so generally misunderstood.

In Gen.2:17 God told Adam that the day he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would die. Adam ate and the same moment he died. ROM 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so **death spread to all men**, because all sinned--. All men are born into this world dead. Not dead in soul and body but dead in their spirit. Since "mere" men are only soul and body, they are only flesh and so "walk in the flesh".

The new birth takes place when God puts "a new spirit" in us and breathes into us the breath of "LIFE". Christ's resurrection "LIFE" dwells in our born again spirit. We call this "spiritual life" as compared to "natural life". The "Christian life" is lived out of the "spiritual life" and not out of the "natural life". When we function out of the natural life we are "walking in the flesh" as mere men. When we are functioning out of the spiritual life we are "walking in the spirit" as Christians. This is why we can be in the spirit one minute and in the flesh the next.

When Jesus baptizes us in the Holy Spirit, He fills us with the Spirit of God. Now it is not just a matter of "LIFE" but a matter of being "led by the Spirit of God" to qualify as "sons of God". This is a matter of gifts and graces in order to serve God. This is a matter of being taught by the Holy Spirit through the anointing. This is a matter of being anointed to **minister in the Spirit** and not just **live in the new spirit**.

The "new spirit" is linked to Jesus Christ and is anointed with the Holy Spirit exactly the same as

the Man, Christ Jesus was. ACT 10:38 “{You know of} Jesus of Nazareth, **how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power**, and {how} He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him. The “new spirit” is Christ in us by “LIFE”. Romans 8 calls this “the Spirit of Christ”. ROM 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. ROM 8:10 And **if Christ is in you**, though the body is dead because of sin, **yet the spirit is alive** because of righteousness.

Jesus Christ was a whole and perfect man. He was without sin etc. Never-the-less He still had to be anointed with the Holy Spirit in order to minister the things of God. Even though Christ imparts His Spirit to us in the new birth we still must be anointed with the Holy Spirit in order to minister the things of God. All born again Christians have the Spirit of Christ or they do not belong to Him. However, all Christians do not have the anointing of the Holy Spirit because they were taught against Him or because they have confused the Spirit of Christ with the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of Christ is the living and abiding Word of God by which we were born again. 1PE 1:23 **for you have been born again** not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, {that is,} **through the living and abiding word of God**. To acknowledge God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit is not heresy. The bible says that Christ is in us. Then it is not heresy to say that Christ is in us. The bible say we are the temple of the Spirit of God. Therefore, it is not heresy to say the Spirit of God dwells in us. It is confusing to say that Christ lives in us through the Holy Spirit. It is much more scriptural to say Christ lives in me and the Holy Spirit lives in me and anoints me for ministry the same as He did for Jesus. It is no different to say the Spirit of Christ lives in me as it is to say the Word of God lives in me. I can say I was born again by the Spirit of Christ or I can say I was born again by the Living and Abiding Word of God. It is confusing to say I was born again by the Holy Spirit unless we say I was born again when the Holy Spirit ministered the Spirit of Christ to me. Jesus Christ, Himself, ministers the Holy Spirit to us and baptizes us with the Holy Spirit. Then the Holy Spirit anoints us and ministers the gifts and graces to us to empower us for ministry. MAT 3:11 “As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; **He, Himself, will baptize you There is another confusion that is cleared up in Romans 8th chapter. ROM 8:16 The Spirit Himself** bears witness with **our spirit** that we are children of God, The Holy Spirit and our new spirit are not the same thing. The Holy Spirit ministers to our new spirit. God speaks to us by the Holy Spirit in our spirit and not in our soul. This is why we must walk in the spirit if we are going to hear God speak. The question then is will we understand what He said? Understanding requires the mind to interpret what He said.

ROM 8:5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, (set their minds on) the things of the Spirit. ROM 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, The mind will focus upward towards the spirit or downward toward the flesh. If God speaks in my spirit and I have my mind turned toward the flesh I will not comprehend what He said. The mind then is essential for our sensitivity to the voice of God, even though God speaks in our spirit. We interpret what God said through our renewed mind that is focused upon our new spirit. Those who are “in the flesh” hear nothing but their own thoughts that originate in their own brain. If we say “Ye, Ye, thus saith the Lord” out of our own brain, we are not prophesying by the Spirit but by the brain. If the Holy Spirit speaks to our spirit and we interpret what He is saying with our

mind and we say the same thing, we are prophesying by the Spirit. The gift of prophesy has to do with origin and not just in the words and thoughts spoken. The prophesy can bring life or death depending upon the origin of the words. ROM 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,-- The mind is the variable. It can turn up toward the spirit or it can turn down toward the flesh. We are said to be “in the Spirit” or we are “in the flesh” depending upon which way the mind is focused. Even though the mind operates as an organ of the soul, it is the mind that sets our course. The soul is the part of man that holds the will, the emotions, the mind, the natural life, the attitudes, affections, ETC.

COL 3:1 If then you have been raised up with Christ, **keep seeking the things above**, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. COL 3:2 **Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.** COL 3:3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. PHI 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, **let your mind dwell on these things.** HEB 10:16 “This is the covenant that I will make with them After those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws upon their heart, **And upon their mind I will write them,** {He then says},

Since it is the mind that is the critical element and determines if we are in the Spirit or in the flesh, it is essential that the mind be renewed to gravitate upward. ROM 12:1 I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, {which is} your spiritual service of worship. ROM 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Paul sums up his vision for the Christian life by repeating the full consecration of the body and the renewing of the mind, which puts us in a position to discover the will of God for our lives. The transformation is directly tied to the renewed mind.

In Rom 8:5-8 it is clear that only those who set their mind on the Spirit (or on the spirit) can walk above the weight of the flesh and serve God in the Spirit. Only those who walk in the Spirit can please God. All the effort expended by the flesh is lost labor. Also, sooner or later, those who walk in the flesh will become hostile toward God and become lawless.

Now, verse 9 is a source of confusion because it seems to say that all Paul said previously is irrelevant because ROM 8:9 However, **you are not in the flesh** but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Since nearly all Christians confess that the Spirit of God dwells in them, then no Christian can walk in the flesh. However, if you have been around for a while, you will know that is not accurate. Paul qualifies or interprets this in V 13. ROM 8:13 for **if you are living according to the flesh**, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. The Amplified Bible says “If the Spirit of God dwells in you and directs and controls you”. Now, I can make that work, but the best manuscripts don’t say that. However, because of the whole context and especially V 13 it seems to be acceptable. If no Christian, who has been filled with the Spirit of God, can walk in the flesh, all Paul said in V 4-8 is beside the point. The “if indeed” in V9 puts a question mark on the statement which indicates that the Spirit of God may not dwell in that dimension in all Christians. However, if they don’t have the Spirit of Christ, it indicates they are not Christians at all. Therefore, it appears logical that the Amplified Bible correctly qualifies V 9. (For further study see the paper on the Spirit of Christ and the Holy

Spirit).

Even if you can't agree with my interpretation of V9, **it is clear that somehow the church must get converted from the flesh to the Spirit, from Adam to Christ, from the world to the Kingdom, from death to LIFE, from sin to holiness, from slaves of sin to slaves of God, from natural, outward laws to the New Covenant, inward laws, and from the spirit of bondage to the spirit of adoption.**

It appears that a gathering of partly converted believers plagued the early church in the same way it does today. The gospel of the half priced sale and the gospel of the bargains along with the gospel of the give-a-ways have produced half converted believers who recognize neither flesh or Spirit.

It is certainly true that from God's side it is all accomplished at Calvary. From our side, all this must be personally appropriated by faith and worked out subjectively before the fruit will be visible objectively. It should be obvious that all who have experienced forgiveness of sins are not yet experiential slaves of God. Since this has been preached as an option, who are we to blame? Multitudes who have confessed forgiveness of sins are still living outside the Kingdom government of God and are ignorant of the laws of God that are given in the New Covenant. From the viewpoint of Christ's finished work, nothing more needs to be done. From the viewpoint of our experience of that tremendous provision, we are still beggars.

Worse yet, we are begging God, in the flesh, to change us and make us like Jesus. We call this "prayer". God's provision is to walk **not after the flesh** but after the Spirit and you will not carry out the carry out the manifestations of the flesh. Not only are we seeking total deliverance from the results of the fall but ROM 8:19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. ROM 8:20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ROM 8:21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.