

The Marvel of Being in Christ Part 2

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Romans 8:5-11

I pray that your heart is prepared to receive what the Holy Spirit has to communicate to you this morning. Take your Bibles. Turn to Romans chapter eight. We now come to verses five through 11 where we will understand more about a contrast of natures which is the title of my discourse to you this morning.

Follow along as I read this text of Scripture I Paul's great epistle to the Romans. Romans chapter eight beginning in verse five.

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, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 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; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 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.

And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. 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.¹

We return again this morning to a monumental chapter, one that forever settles the issue of the eternal security of the believer, an issue that is settled in a Gibraltar of truth based upon Paul's opening assertion in verse one that:

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”²

For those who have genuinely placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their only hope of salvation. My friends, that is the great news in all the world. That is the news of the gospel, that when we come to Christ there is now no condemnation.

Paul has told us thus far that because of this we have been delivered from the penalty of the law. We have been united to Christ by the Holy Spirit. What the law was unable to do, namely, save a man, is now accomplished because of our union with Christ. He has explained that we are empowered by the indwelling Spirit, the Holy Spirit that gives us victory over sin and that it is the work of the indwelling Spirit of God that guarantees our salvation.

¹ Romans 8:5-11.

² Romans 8:1.

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These are staggering truths. He has helped us learn thus far that God not only justifies the ungodly, but he places us in Christ. We were once in Adam. Now we are in Christ. God has not only declared us to be righteous, though we are really guilty. He hasn't seen us in that way, but, rather, based upon our union with Christ he declares the believer to be wholly righteous because he now sees us in his Son, a staggering truth. And as a result of the miracle of justification, we also have new life in the Spirit. We see that in verses two through four.

Verse two says:

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.”³

So because we are in Christ, we possess the divine life of God's own Spirit and he now operates in us. Our life is now influenced by a whole new law, a whole new principle of operation, a ruling force within us, namely the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. And it is he, who, according to the end of verse two, who has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

You will recall that the old law that operated in us was the law of sin and that leads to death. But the new law is totally different. This new law that operates within us is the law of the Spirit that leads to life. And by way of review, according to verse three, the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ, again, accomplished that which the law could not do. We could not obey the law sufficiently to somehow save ourselves. So God had to do something for us. He had to send his Son as our substitute to die on our behalf, to become the perfect sacrifice to satisfy the holy justice of God. So he became an offering for our sin. He took upon himself our condemnation so that we would have none.

Why? Verse four.

“...in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”⁴

So, again, we see that the Holy Spirit empowers us to have this passion and power to live righteously. He becomes the controlling influence in our life.

Now that brings us to our text here this morning in verses five through 11. Paul is now going to elaborate on these distinctions. He is going to talk about those who walk according to the flesh versus those who walk according to the Spirit. He wishes to contrast here the radical change that takes place in those who are in Christ, versus those who are not. To think that in some inscrutable way we are actually hidden in him. He is doing to demonstrate that the unbeliever, the unregenerate person who has never truly been born again, who is not in Christ and who, therefore, does not have the Spirit of God in him,

³ Romans 8:2.

⁴ Romans 8:4.

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cannot possibly fulfill the requirement of the law as stated in verse four. He cannot do that.

Now these are very important distinctions. Don't think of this merely as some deep theological discussion that we need to look at academically, but, rather, this is very, very practical for where we live. This not only advances the apostle's revelation here concerning all these staggering realities, but it also helps us discern the truth about our own spiritual condition. And you want to examine your heart with respect to that this morning. Have you truly been justified and therefore forever removed from God's condemnation? Or have you been deceived, thinking that somehow you have been reconciled to God when, in fact, you have not. Jesus was very concerned about this matter. You will recall in Matthew chapter seven he spoke upon it extensively. He described the few versus the many, warning that far more people would fall victim to a counterfeit Christianity, would fall victim to self deception than those who would truly repent and be born again.

You may recall that he described two gates, the narrow and the wide. He spoke about two ways, the narrow and the broad that lead to two destinations, life and destruction. He spoke of two groups of people, the few and the many. And he likened them to two kinds of trees, the good and the bad that would produce two kinds of fruit, the good and the bad. He spoke of two kinds of people who profess Christ, the true and the false. He spoke about two kinds of spiritual builders, the wise versus the foolish who had two kinds of religious foundations, one on rock and the other on sand. He spoke of two kinds of houses of faith, one that would withstand the storms of divine judgment and the other that would collapse in a heap of eternal ruin. For that reason Jesus said in Matthew seven verse 21:

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'⁵

The secret letters of the Catholic nun Mother Theresa discovered about 12, 13 years ago I should say 12 or 13 years after he death and probably about that many years ago, shocked much of the religious world as you may recall. She admitted that she spent almost 50 years of her life without sensing the presence of God in her life, quote, "Neither in her heart or in the eucharist," end quote.

If you read what she wrote, she bemoaned a spiritual dryness, loneliness and torture, feelings that she compared to the experience of hell to the point of causing her to doubt the existence of heaven and even the very existence of God. She acknowledged that she

⁵ Matthew 7:21-23.

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was acutely aware of the discrepancy between her inner state and her public demeanor, stating, quote, “the smile is a mask or a cloak that covers everything.”

She admitted that she really wondered whether or not she had been engaged in some kind of verbal deception. Despite her religious fervor and her selfless love to the needy in Calcutta, she described the horrors of a black hole of spiritual emptiness.

She said this, quote, “Lord, my God, who am I that you should forsake me the child of your love and now become as the most hated one, the one you have thrown away as unwanted, unloved? I call, I cling, I want and there is no one to answer, no one on whom I can cling. No, no one. Alone. Where is my faith? Even deep down, right in there is nothing but emptiness and darkness. Oh, my God, how painful is this unknown pain. I have no faith. I dare not utter the words and thoughts that crowd in my heart and make me suffer untold agony. So many unanswered questions live within me, afraid to uncover them, because of the blasphemy. If there be a God, please forgive me. When I try to raise my thoughts to heaven there is such convicting emptiness that those very thoughts return like sharp knives and hurt my very soul. I am told God loves me and yet the reality of darkness and coldness and emptiness is so great that nothing touches my soul. Did I make a mistake in surrendering blindly to the call of the sacred heart?” end quote.

And the answer is, yes, you did.

How tragic. This is the testimony of a person who was self deceived. She believed that salvation comes through faith in Mary, through the sacraments, through religious works rather than in Christ alone.

John tells us in 1 John five verse 10:

The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.⁶

So, my friends, being able to discern between true and false Christianity is especially important. Certainly in our day when the gospel is so distorted, when grace is so cheapened to a point where anybody’s profession of faith is considered legitimate regardless of what they believe or how they live. For this reason many if not most Christian churches today are made up of more counterfeit self deceived Christians than true. And the Lord warned of this. There would be the few and the many.

⁶ 1 John 5:10-12.

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So with this in mind we come to the apostle's inspired revelation that distinguishes the only two kinds of people that exist within the world, those who walk according to the flesh versus those who walk according to the Spirit.

We are going to see that one is death and the other is life and peace. We will see that one is hostile toward God, the other devoted to God. One refuses to submit to God's law. The other seeks to fulfill God's law. One is unable to submit to God's law while the other is able. And one cannot please God, but the other can.

I have outlined this in two very simple categories. We will look, first, at unbelievers whose life is controlled by the flesh and then secondly at believers whose life is controlled by the Spirit.

So, again, Paul wants to emphasize here the radical change of nature between those who are in Christ and thereby indwelt by his Spirit, but the Holy Spirit of God versus those who remain under the tyranny of sin and Satan and the sentence of eternal death.

So let's look, first of all, at what he says about unbeliever's whose life is controlled by the flesh, verse five.

“For those who are according to the flesh...”⁷

That is that they are walking according to the flesh, verse four. Notice what they do.

“[They] set their minds on the things of the flesh.”⁸

Now so that you understand the terms that he is using, the word “according” really carries the idea of conforming to or being under something else, under the authority of something. So the idea here is that a non Christian is habitually under the authority, under the domination of his fallen sinful nature with which he was born.

Well, what is the flesh? Well, as you look at it in the New Testament you see that it speaks of man's sinful nature, his moral inadequacy, his unredeemed humanness, his innate inability to conform to the moral character and desires of God.

Now often times when we hear the term “flesh” our minds immediately go to something with respect to sensuality or gross immorality. But the term encompasses something far more than just that. For example, in Galatians chapter five beginning in verse 19 the apostle Paul says:

“Now the deeds of the flesh are evident.”⁹

⁷ Romans 8:5.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

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And then he gives us a list.

“...which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality...”¹⁰

Which, by the way speaks of unrestrained sexual indulgence without any shame, without any concern for others.

It would also include, he says, idolatry. That is the worship of false gods. It can also be the worship of the true God wrongly whereby you distort the character of God and it speaks of those who would find their satisfaction in something other than the God of the Bible.

The deeds of the flesh would also include sorcery. It is interesting. In the original language the term is *farmakeia* (far-mak-i'-ah). We get “pharmacy” from that, because it originally spoke of the use of mind altering drugs that people used in occultic practices whereby they thought that they could use these drugs to somehow speak to the deities. So the term eventually came to mean witchcraft and magic.

The deeds of the flesh include enmities. This is hateful attitudes toward other people. And, of course, this leads to strife which refers to bitter conflicts, to:

“...jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing...”¹¹

We see this all the time. This is the MTV, the spring break, the occupy Wall Street crowd. And then he says:

“...and things like these.”¹²

In other words, et cetera. This is a sampling of the list.

“...and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things...”¹³

In other words, when this is the habitual passion and practice of their life, they shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Now, again, notice what Paul says in verse five of Romans eight.

“For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh.”¹⁴

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Galatians 5:20-21.

¹² Galatians 5:21.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Romans 8:5.

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What a powerful indictment. What does that mean to set your mind? It literally means to continuously give serious consideration to something, to ponder, to let one's mind dwell upon something, to keep thinking about, to fix your attention on something.

You will recall in Colossians three verse two the term is used when Paul says:

“Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.”¹⁵

So what Paul is saying is that those who are according to the flesh, they literally dwell on the things of the flesh. They continually think about things like immorality, purity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery. It produces enmity, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions envying, drunkenness, carousing and so forth. In other words, the object of their desires, the preoccupation of their mind, the habitual theme of their thought life, all that they strive after are the things of the flesh.

You say, “Well, ah, what about the moral, the religious man? Well he is not excluded. He may be genuinely moral. He may be kind. He may be cultured. He may be self sacrificing. He may be noble in the eyes of the world. He may be like the Pharisees. But if he is devoid of the Spirit of God he will do these things for the glory of self, not to the glory of God. And he is therefore as vile as in God's eyes is the most profligate sinner and ultimately he will love the world, he will love the things of the world, all that the world can offer him.

1 John 2:15, therefore, the love of the Father will not be in him. In fact, in verse 16 of 1 John two he goes not to say:

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.”¹⁶

So for the unbeliever, regardless of their perceived morality or religiosity, if he is not truly in Christ, the dominating influence of his life will be his flesh, his fallen nature. And this can only be satisfied in what the world has to offer.

Because of his sin nature, all that he is, all that he does is fundamentally offensive to God. He is incapable of fulfilling, therefore, the supreme commandment to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. He loves himself too much and all that the world offers.

You will recall in Ephesians chapter two Paul described in that text the preconversion marks of our old nature. In verse one he says:

¹⁵ Colossians 3:2.

¹⁶ 1 John 2:16.

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And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.¹⁷

You may recall Peter's words of 1 Peter chapter two and verse 10 where he describes the unregenerate man as those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires.

Paul also said in Philippians 3:19 that these are those, quote:

"...whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things."¹⁸

Now Satan understands this perfectly well. He knows precisely where to lay the snares of temptation. He will lay them in the paths of our lusts where we set our mind. We see this all the time. He raises up false teachers who preach a false gospel. For example, a gospel of health and wealth, a gospel of self fulfillment rather than a gospel of self denial. And this fills stadiums.

I think of a charlatan named Joel Olsteen. Maybe many of you know of him. Just think of the title of a book that he wrote not too long ago, *Your Best Life Now*. That says it all, doesn't it? In it, you will discover ways that he has conjured up to help you develop, quote, your full potential. And you see charlatans like this all the time preaching a gospel that will help you learn how to manipulate God, so ultimately you can satisfy the desires of your flesh, of which your mind is set on. And here people teaching in these circles about how that prayer and faith gives God permission to bless you, as if, somehow, he is submissive to our wills. Blasphemous types of things.

You see, it is man, not God that is at the center of a charlatan's theology. We see this over and over and countless churches have succumbed to similar satanic lies. And why is this so attractive to the masses of people? Oh, Paul makes it clear. Because it appeals to those who set their minds on the things of the flesh.

Notice verse six.

"For the mind set on the flesh is death."¹⁹

I want you to notice. It does not say it leads to death, but it is death. Fascinating.

¹⁷ Ephesians 2:1-3.

¹⁸ Philippians 3:19.

¹⁹ Romans 8:6.

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You see, the unbeliever is alive physically, but spiritually he is dead, he is a spiritual cadaver. There is no life in him. Paul reminds us in Colossians one verse 21 that we, too, were, quote:

“...formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds.”²⁰

Ephesians 2:1. We were dead in our trespasses and sins.

So, you see, the unregenerate lives in the realm of the condemned. The wrath of God, Jesus says, abides on them. They are doomed to eternal death. That which is dead, of course, cannot respond to anything. It certainly cannot respond to God. God has to do something.

You may recall in Matthew 16 we have a wonderful illustration of this. There Jesus asked his disciples:

“‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.’”²¹

You see, these are all answers of the spiritual dead. They just don’t get it. They don’t see it.

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."²²

There it is. You see, the mind set on the flesh is death. God must breathe spiritual life into that cadaver, because the dead cannot see it. They don’t get it. And, of course, he does this by the washing of regeneration and the renewing by the Holy Spirit, Titus 3:5.

So, again, an unbeliever is spiritually dead.

Now he may spend much of his life thinking about God. I have some friends who are theologians in academia who think about God all the time. They write about God. But they hate the one true God. The God they think about, the God they write about is not the God of the Bible. In fact, most people today who worship Jesus do not worship the Jesus of the Bible. They worship some smiling faced Santa Claus Jesus that has been recently invented to appeal to the lust of people’s flesh. It is not the God of the Bible.

²⁰ Colossians 1:21.

²¹ Matthew 16:13-14.

²² Matthew 16:15-17.

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You see, their minds do not dwell on the God who has revealed himself in the Word. They want nothing to do with that kind of God. They live outside the life of God.

If you don't believe me, just go to these kinds of people and tell them, my friend, the God that you describe, the God that you believe in is not the God of the Bible. And therefore, based upon what God says, you are spiritually dead. You are under the wrath of God and unless you repent and place your faith in the one true God, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ who bore your sins in his body, unless you do that, you will perish in an eternal hell. You tell them that and you find out what they think about your God. They will be apoplectic with rage.

Why? Because this isn't the God they want.

Now notice what Paul says in verse seven.

“...the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God.”²³

Again referring to the true God, the God that has revealed himself in the Bible. He goes on to say:

“...for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so.”²⁴

You see, the unbeliever loves their sin more than God. They live for all the world can offer them. And, of course, James tells us in chapter four verse four that friendship with the world is hostility towards God. It goes on to say:

“...whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”²⁵

Now, my friend, if this describes you, I beg you to examine your heart to see if, indeed, you are in him.

Now notice, This mind that is set on the flesh and therefore hostile to God he says does not subject itself to the law of God for it is not even able to do so. A powerful statement. And, of course, we see this all through the New Testament. Apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, an unbeliever will despise the law, the Word of God. He will hate it. He wants nothing to do with it unless you twist it to make it appealing to the flesh. It will profoundly offend his self righteous pride. The gospel of grace will be foolishness to him.

Why? Because, again, the mind set on the flesh is death.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians two verse 14 that:

²³ Romans 8:7.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ James 4:4.

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“But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”²⁶

Appraised literally means that they are unable to render a verdict because they cannot discern the facts.

Have you ever wondered why so many professing Christian people will attend churches where the Word of God is routinely butchered? I can turn on the television on virtually any day and hear this. I can see men standing up, and women, as well, absolutely butchering the Word of God, saying things that are blasphemous. And people are hooting and hollering. They are running down aisles. They are making all kinds of racket. They are all excited and emotional. How does that happen?

Well, it is very simple. We read it right here. It is because their minds are set on the flesh. You see, for them the gospel is all about man and his deeds, not God and his glory.

By the way, this is the stuff of best sellers in our Christian bookstores. You see, they are hostile to God. They refuse to subject themselves, to submit themselves to the law of God. They are not even able to do so.

Let me give you an illustration of this that I read about a number of years ago. It is a true story of two powerful men. One was a believer, one wasn't. William Wilberforce was the leader, you may recall and the abolition movement, the abolish of slavery in Britain a number of years ago. And he had a friend, William Pitt the younger who was one time prime minister of Britain.

Now Wilberforce loved his dear friend Pitt and wanted him to come to Christ in saving faith. And so he constantly invited him to come and hear his favorite preacher there in London, Richard Cecil, who was a powerful evangelical minister of the Word of God and of the Church of England. He rightly divided the Word.

And finally one day Pitt decided to go, to go to church with him. And as the story goes the Word of God went forth with great power, with great clarity and Wilberforce found himself, once again, lost in the wonders of sovereign grace and the glory of God's love that he had set upon sinners. And he also found himself wondering how the gospel was being received by his dear friend.

As they exited, Pitt looked over at him and said, quote, “You know, Wilberforce, I have not the slightest idea what that man has been talking about,” end quote.

Of course not. His mind set on the flesh is dead. It is hostile toward God. It cannot subject itself to the law of God. It is not even capable of doing so.

²⁶ 1 Corinthians 2:14.

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Why would he possibly submit to a God he hates and obey a law that he cannot discern? It is not going to happen unless the Spirit of God does something.

For this reason the apostle concludes in verse eight of Romans eight:

“...and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”²⁷

You see, the unbeliever lives to satisfy his flesh. Because of his sin nature, his mind is programmed to live for the glory of self, not for the glory of God.

Now to see this more clearly Paul gives us a contrast as he often does. Look, secondly now, at the believer whose life is controlled not by the flesh, but by his spirit, the Spirit of God.

Verse five.

“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, the things of the Spirit.”²⁸

Notice the phrase, “Those who are according to the Spirit.”²⁹

That can literally be translated, those being accorded to the Spirit. This emphasizes the believer’s realm of living, the bent of his life which is now habitually dominated by the Spirit of God that lives within him. He is no longer controlled by his flesh.

Now please understand. The presence of the Spirit of God is really the distinguishing mark of the true Christian that creates in him a new nature. The Spirit of God does that. There is a radical transformation that empowers him to operate now by the Spirit rather than by the flesh, to have victory over sin and so forth.

So Christian undergoes a radical transformation, a complete change and therefore he enters into the realm of the Spirit. Otherwise the righteousness of the law could never be fulfilled in him.

You may recall in 2 Corinthians five verse 17. We read that:

“...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”³⁰

He goes on to say:

²⁷ Romans 8:8.

²⁸ Romans 8:5.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ 2 Corinthians 5:17.

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“Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ.”³¹

Again, a dead man cannot give life to himself. God has to do something. It is God who makes us alive in Christ, who hides us in Christ. The Spirit of God indwells us. And, as a result, notice verse five. Genuine believers will be able to set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

Verse 14. He even says that we are being led by the Spirit of God.

Now, friends, think about this. Because of the empowering work of the Holy Spirit of God within the believer, the mind habitually focuses on the things of the Spirit. This is a fascinating thought. This denotes a deliberate, voluntary passionate longing for those things that are important to the Spirit, the things that the Spirit would draw our attention to.

Well, what are those things? Let me give you an example in 1 Corinthians chapter two and verse seven.

Paul speaks of the wisdom of God. He speaks of a mystery:

“... the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory.”³²

In verse nine he speaks of:

“THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND which HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.”³³

Verse 10.

“For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.”³⁴

Beloved, these are the things of the Spirit that will dominate the mind of the redeemed, divine truths that God has revealed to us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit through the apostles, the truths of the gospel, the truths about God saving sinners to glorify himself. The things of the Spirit are biblical truths. That is what is going to occupy our mind. These are truths that have not somehow been discovered through human cogitation. They have not been somehow discovered by empirical research. They have not been discovered by rational thought, but through divine revelation where God

³¹ 2 Corinthians 5:18.

³² 1 Corinthians 2:7.

³³ 1 Corinthians 2:9.

³⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:10.

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has communicated to us through the Spirit the things that will occupy our mind, not out of duty, but out of desire, because of the work of grace that the Spirit has wrought within our souls.

He goes on to say at the end of verse 11 in 1 Corinthians two:

...the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.³⁵

Isn't it amazing. We come to Christ and suddenly the truths of Scripture are no longer a mystery to us. We have been truly born again. God has revealed them to the apostles and, likewise, these truths are revealed to us. They become the passion of our souls, the priority of our life. Like Peter said in 1 Peter 2:2, we are like newborn babes. We long for the pure milk of the Word that we might grow in respect to salvation. We cannot get enough of it. It is a matter of life and death to us. We long for the Word of God and we have no time for those who would distort it and who would cheapen and trivialize the gospel. It sickens us. We stand in awe of God and we long to see the greatness of God, the glory of God.

You see, a man controlled by the Spirit of God will be repulsed by the things of the flesh even when he commits them. He will see the odious nature of his sin. He will hate his sin and he will glory in God's grace that has saved him.

You see, his soul has been awakened to the glory of God. Therefore he will care little for the things of the world. He will say, "Oh God, show me your glory. Use me for your glory."

He will do as Jesus has commanded. He will have denied himself, renounced himself. He is willing to take up a cross daily and follow Christ. There will be a personal pursuit of holiness. Can I put it that way? There will be a secret devotion to God.

Jonathan Edwards called it holy affections. That is the mark of the genuine believer. He will have, according to Romans 5:5, a hope that does not disappoint. Why? Because the love of God has been poured out within his heart through the Holy Spirit.

In other words, he has a subjective awareness of God's love for him and he can't get enough of it.

Having experienced the love of God that the Spirit has poured out within his heart, he will wrestle with God like Jacob until God gives him the blessing. Oh, God, I want to feel more of your love, more of your power. I want to know more of who you are. I want to

³⁵ 1 Corinthians 2:11-13.

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see more of your glory. I want to enjoy more of you. You have given me a sample of it and I want more and more. I am starving for the greatness of the glory of God. I long to see more of the excellency and the majesty of Christ.

That is the mind that is set on the Spirit.

This person will remain in a state of sheer wonder as he constantly beholds the face of his Savior and the glory of the cross. And he will not merely think about the cross from time to time. He will not merely think about the gospel from time to time, especially when he just when he goes to church, but, again, it will be the habit of his mind to dwell upon these things. He will be like Isaac Watts who wrote that great hymn *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*. There will be a surveying. The cross will be a life long study for the person who has been transformed by the Spirit of God.

Because of the mysteries of God he will commit his life as a living sacrifice to him. He longs to spend much time with God in prayer. In fact, prayer, communion with God will be to him spiritually what air is to him physically. He cannot live without it. He will live in a constant state of war as a soldier of the cross. He will constantly fight the good fight, battling his sin, battling Satan. He longs to see sinners come to repentance.

These are the things of the Spirit. These are the things that will occupy his mind. He will love to fellowship with God's people because it will be a taste of heaven. Haven't we had that here today? This is what he will long for. He will long to be in church to worship the triune God, to serve. Again, he will care little for this world.

His life will be characterized by the phrase captured by the hymnist that said:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus.
Look full at his wonderful face.
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of his glory and grace.

My friend, this is the stuff of genuine Christianity. This is the stuff of the man who sets his mind on the things of the Spirit. Does this describe you?

Paul goes on in verse six. He said:

“For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.”³⁶

Again, bear in mind that it is the Holy Spirit that imparts both physical and spiritual life. John has told us in John 6:63 that:

“It is the Spirit who gives life.”³⁷

³⁶ Romans 8:6.

³⁷ John 6:63.

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And he also said in John three that every believer is born of the Spirit. God has to do something. We are spiritually dead. He is the supernatural agent of regeneration that causes us to be born again.

To think he gives us spiritual life, eternal life. We are finally at peace with God. The war is over. We are no longer his enemy. Now we are his adopted sons. Amazing, amazing truths.

I never tire of thinking of them, nor do you, if you know Christ. That is where my mind goes. Everything else is secondary or tertiary. I love to do a lot of things and I will enjoy the things that God has given me, but ultimately where does my mind come back to? Where does it focus. It focuses on the things of the Spirit.

Now notice how Paul goes on to describe this life in the Spirit as he brings encouragement to the Roman believers.

Verse nine.

“However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.”³⁸

I love that term “dwell” in the original language. It means to reside or live in, to take up permanent residence in. Isn’t that amazing that the Spirit of God dwells within us? Actually when you look at it there is really no distinguishing between the Holy Spirit and the Son and the Father. They all dwell within us in some inscrutable way that we cannot fathom.

He goes on to say:

“But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”³⁹

So much for the heresy that claims that believers must earnestly seek a, quote, second work of grace, a spirit baptism as they call it to somehow achieve the higher level of spirituality or to somehow have certain miraculous abilities like the speaking in the tongues and whatever.

Beloved, nowhere in Scripture are you commanded to any of that stuff. That is all a lie based on a distorted understanding of a few texts especially in Acts. Biblically every believer is baptized by Christ with the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. Very simple.

Ephesians 4:5. We have one Lord, one faith and how many baptisms? One. One baptism.

³⁸ Romans 8:9.

³⁹ Romans 8:9.

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If you don't have the Spirit what does Paul say? Then you don't belong to him. Very simple.

Verse 10. He goes on.'

"If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin..."⁴⁰

That is, because of sin we are all going to die physically.

But notice this other certainty based upon our justification:

"...yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness."⁴¹

Again, think about this. Because of the Holy Spirit that dwells in us, our Spirit is alive, the righteousness of Christ is ours. We have been declared righteous because of Christ in whom we are now hidden.

And then Paul gives this wonderful summary here in verse 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."⁴²

My friends, can there be any greater power than this, than the power of the Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead? Think about that. And to think that the very power that can raise the physically dead, can also raise the spiritually dead. That is the amazing truth and it is his power that causes us not only to feel the love of God experientially, which Romans 5:5 tells us, but it is this power that imparts to us eternal life and causes us to bear not the deeds of the flesh, but the fruit of the Spirit which is the opposite of the deeds of the flesh as Galatians five talks about:

"...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."⁴³

So, my friend, herein is the stark contrast between the two natures. And I would humbly ask you: Where do you see yourself? Which one describes you? And I would close by simply saying: if your life bears no similarity to those who walk according to the Spirit, to those who set their minds on the things of the spirit. Then, my friend, you have no legitimate claim to Christ and you need to examine your heart, lest you be like Mother Theresa and countless millions of others who have been deceived by a false religion or even by their own flesh.

⁴⁰ Romans 8:10.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Romans 8:11.

⁴³ Galatians 5:22-23.

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What a sobering truth.

Let's bow our heads.

Father, again, we thank you for the truth of your Word that so clearly help us see that work of grace that you have worked in our lives. Lord, I pray that you would help us all to examine our hearts. I pray, Lord, that we would test ourselves to see if we are in the faith, examine ourselves as Paul has told us to do. Or do you not recognize this about yourself that Jesus Christ is in you unless, indeed, you fail the test? So, Lord, I pray that you will speak to every heart. And for those of us who have been born again by the power of your Spirit, Lord, help us to dwell even more on the things of the Spirit that we might enjoy more fully every expression of your grace in our lives until we see you face to face. I pray in Jesus' name and to the praise of his glory. Amen.

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