

ROMANS BIBLE STUDY

Romans 8:09-11(a)

Lesson #19

Introduction

As I was preparing this weeks lesson the verse just seemed to grow and expand, and the more I said the more I felt I needed to say, so I did. We know that sometimes bible verses are a little difficult to understand, maybe because they were translated from other languages, and the grammatical structure is unusual to us, but sometimes they are so very clear that there's absolutely no possibility of misunderstanding what they're saying. This weeks lesson is precisely that, the words are so clear that it leaves us nearly speechless. It's so clear that we just don't know exactly how to deal with the obvious and inescapable ramifications. Are we really supposed to take Paul's words at face value, and actually believe exactly what he says, and everything that it by necessity includes with it? Listen to this lesson and decide for yourself. I've titled it:
(Read verses 5-11)

If the Spirit of God Dwells in You

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, the things of the Spirit. 6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 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, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

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. 10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. 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.

Romans 8:9-11 (NASB)

Verse 9:

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.

I don't know about others, but in the churches that I've attended in the past there was much discussion of being "in the Spirit." But the one thing that was always missing from those discussions was a clear and understandable definition of just exactly what that term actually means. It sounds nice, and it's biblical, but what does it actually mean? How do we know if we're living "in the Spirit" or not? Will our behavior tell us that? Or is there some invisible and unknown force that's upon us directing our actions and motives? I've been in churches that looked at the Spirit as some kind of mystic force that we had to learn how to tap into and then we would have its power. Is it like the Pentecostals believe, a kind of heavenly power to perform miracles and speak meaningless noises that we call a foreign language? You see, it's because we don't understand what being "in the Spirit" really means that there's so many silly ideas and confused perspectives. So, lets spend a few minutes clearing that up by looking at what the bible says about being "in the Spirit."

According to this very verse, we are "in the Spirit" if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in us. So how do we know if the Spirit of God dwells in us, since we can't see Him, or touch Him, or hear Him? First lets stipulate that the Spirit of God is invisible and eternal and is in many, if not most ways, beyond our full comprehension at this present time. But, He has provided another aspect that is entirely experiential and cognitive and completely within our own recognition. And it's this portion of which the bible speaks to us. That part of the Spirit of God that is within our perception and our understanding.

In the beginning God create a man out of the elements of the ground, and the scriptures say that God breathed into that dirt man the breath of life, and he became a living being. (Gen 2:7) He became conscious and aware of his own existence. He had feelings and emotions and appreciations that formed who and what he was. This was all the result of the Spirit of God indwelling him. But that Spirit had also given life to his body of dirt, as well as his mind and emotions and will. Adam was a man who was innocent of sin and in perfect mental accord with God. But he was also entirely ignorant of something that God understood very well, and Adam would always be a defenseless child until he met this thing called sin. Adam was like a little baby in a man's body, in that he didn't know the difference between good and evil, in fact he didn't even know there were such things.

Then, just as God had planned, Adam and his mate Eve disobeyed God's order to abstain from eating the fruit of a certain tree, and in committing that offense, that act of disobedience, Adam and Eve were launched into the presence of this deadly force called sin. And, just as God had warned, the spirit of Adam and Eve were rendered dead to God, in so much as their mind's and emotions's and will's were concerned.

And from that moment on their bodies also began to age and deteriorate, and would eventually also die, just like their spirit's had died. Before that day, Adam and Eve looked forward to the Lord's presence with them in the Garden, but immediately afterwards they were afraid of God and tried to hide from Him. Their fear of God shows the visible effect of what had happened to their way of thinking after their disobedience. They couldn't see any difference in their physical bodies, but they were very much aware of something that had happened on the inside of them. While they had no idea of what happened, or how it happened, they were absolutely clear that it did happen. They were ashamed of their nakedness and they were afraid of God, and they knew this with absolute clarity.

So, the causative affects of having, or not having the Spirit of God are invisible, and just what makes this work is beyond our understanding, but we are not ignorant of the effects that it has upon us. On how we think and how we feel. Firstly toward God himself. Do we love Him and seek His presence, or are we afraid of Him, or even hostile towards Him? Or is He a complete mystery to us? It is the cognitive effects of the indwelling Spirit of God by which we humans can unmistakably know if the Spirit of God dwells in us. We don't have to guess, we don't have to just hope, we can know for sure, and it is the ultimate responsibility of every living being to take the time and effort to know for sure, because our eternal destiny rests on this very issue. Okay, so what are the sure signs of the Spirit of God dwelling within us?

First lets acknowledge that an attitude of self-righteousness is not one of those signs, in fact just the opposite. Neither is the total absence of sin in our lives the sure sign. (Rm 7:14-25) So, what are the reliable signs? First, a genuine love of God, the true God described in the bible, not the one many people fashion in their own carnal mind's. Do you first and foremost feel genuine love, and appreciation, and gratitude toward God for His tender mercies, or are you kind of afraid of Him? Now I'm not talking about the fear of the Lord that's good, there is such a fear, but that's speaking of His authority and power, in those respects every living creature should fear the Lord, because flagrant disobedience to His righteous commandments will incur serious consequences. But those who are in mental harmony with God, those who think and feel, and love and hate all the same things as God, these are not afraid of God, they're living in eager expectation of His soon return. Are you living every moment in eager hope of His soon return, or would you really rather that He delay that for a while? These are some of the reliable indicators of whether the Spirit of God dwells in you. And you know how you feel, it isn't mysterious or vague. Your own beliefs and feelings are perfectly clear to you, they aren't hidden.

Secondly, and very important, how do you feel about the scriptures, and all those things that are taught in those scriptures? The word of God is God. The Spirit of God, and the Word of God, and God himself are all one and the same. (Jn 1:1-2) You cannot truly love God and at the very same time disagree with what He says in His holy scriptures. What He says and who He is are the same thing. God is not like man, everything that He says is true and righteous and holy, because He speaks from who He is, so every word He utters is Him. If His Spirit dwells in you, then you cannot possibly disagree with what He says in His scriptures, because He cannot disagree with Himself. Having His Spirit within us means that we have His attitudes, His affections, His whole mindset on sin and righteousness. The only difference is our inability to achieve it, not our agreement with it. Our rebirth, our regeneration, our sanctification, is that act of God, through the Holy Spirit, whereby God replaces our fallen and sinful mindset, our way of thinking, with His perfect and holy mindset and way of thinking, just like Adam had at his beginning. Our flesh is still weak and sinful, but our mindset, meaning our spirit, also called our innate will, has been renewed in the likeness of Jesus Christ, so that we joyfully concur with the laws of God in our renewed inner man, meaning our new spirit and mindset. It is a mindset that agrees with God, fully and completely, that is the cognitive aspect of what it means to have the Spirit of God dwelling in us. It means that we wholeheartedly agree with God on everything that He says, because He has put His mind into our mind, and that is what being "in the Spirit" actually means to us from our mental, comprehensible perspective. That is the discernable result.

For instance, I once had a very nice older lady in one of my Sunday school classes. When I taught the bible she would often say, very politely and ladylike, that she didn't agree with that. To which I would always gently and respectfully reply,

well, (lets call her Betty), who then should we believe, you or God? She never had an answer for that question. Now it's surely commonplace to read some things in the scriptures that we don't clearly understand at first, but if we do understand, and we just don't agree, then the Spirit of God cannot be resident within us. Again, In these verses, the Spirit of God, in its cognitive aspect, is referring to our mental condition, our way of thinking being made in perfect harmony with that of God. We are in the Spirit when the Spirit of God has been literally infused into our minds. This was precisely the meaning of that promised new Covenant which Ezekiel and Jeremiah foretold:

26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. (Eze 36:26-27)

In these verses the promise was: *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I will put My Spirit within you* And again in Jeremiah He said: *"I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it;* (Jer 31:33) That new heart means an innate set of desires and affections that are in harmony with God, and the new spirit is a new way of thinking that agrees with God in every respect. This is a gift of God and it isn't just pretty words, it's a description of something very real, and permanent, and entirely discernable to us. When we thoroughly agree with God, in every situation, on what is sin and what is righteous, it is because we have a new heart and a new spirit (His Spirit) that has replaced the fallen sin damaged heart and mindset with which we were born. And this is why the rest of the world mostly disagrees, because their heart and mind are still suffering the damaging effects of sin. Oh, they might agree on one or two things, or even several things, but the truly born again believers will agree with God, meaning what He has recorded in His holy scriptures, on every single issue, without exception, every time. This is among the most significant "tells" that we have as to the authenticity of our salvation. Anyone who does not agree with the word of God, when rightly interpreted, does not have His Spirit dwelling within them because the Spirit of God cannot disagree with Himself. Now, let me say that this does not preclude some issues of differing interpretation of biblical doctrines, because in these cases both parties fully believe what they perceive to be the truth of those verses. These disagreements are over how to properly understand them, not over whether or not they're true.

However, much of the time what is called differing interpretation is just a ruse for masking unbelief. There are things taught in the scriptures over and over again to the point that any debate of what they mean is pointless. If someone doesn't believe these things it's because they don't have the Spirit of God resident within them. To be specific, the things about creating and worshiping false gods, and various sexual behaviors, and honesty, and truth. And there are undeniable things about service to God, and who can and who cannot serve as pastors and teachers. We hear these issues debated quite often within "so called" churches, but these are not genuine matters of interpretation, that's a ruse for simply disagreeing with God and stubbornly refusing to submit to His clear and evident commands. When someone says "well I interpret that differently" most of the time what they really mean is that they refuse to accept what it clearly says, so they intentionally try to redefine it, or pretend that it's unclear. There's probably more of this going on inside the churches than outside, because those on the outside simply don't care what the scriptures say, they don't agree with any of it.

Before we proceed it is imperative that we rightly understand the ramifications of actually being "in the Spirit" as the bible uses this term. It is not like the cheerleaders at a ball game trying to get you "in the spirit" of the team, that's an emotional state of enthusiasm through the manipulation of your emotions, and it isn't permanent. In the biblical usage, this term is describing a permanent state of mind, and innate will, that is in full agreement with God. This is not speaking of an emotional state, but rather a state of being, a permanent condition. Our emotional state, at any given time, is subject to various influences, and as Paul just spent a whole chapter explaining, we are being pulled in different directions by the conflict between our new spirit and our old flesh, but we can never, ever, think or believe, anything that is contrary to God's clear commands, even when we aren't able to keep them perfectly. Behaving differently is one thing, but believing differently is another thing entirely. A Christian can and does occasionally disobey God, but a Christian can never disagree with God, that's just not possible if one is truly indwelt by the Spirit of God. Because this is precisely what was born again, our innate and underlying sense of values and affections, and our whole perspective on right and wrong, good and evil, sin and righteousness. If we don't fully agree with God on these base issues, then our old spirit and nature has not been renewed, regardless of our membership in a church or our claim of salvation. There is no disagreeing with God, meaning His holy scriptures, on issues of sin and morality among true Christians, period.

We can be, and we are amazed by God, taught by God, surprised by God, even shocked by God and occasionally terrified by God, but we are never in disagreement with God, if His Spirit dwells in us. This simply cannot happen. We might be mystified occasionally by something the scriptures say, and unable to comprehend it, but continued time and study will eventually reveal the truth of that situation, and God's wisdom and righteousness are always revealed and vindicated. If you've been a Christian for very long this has surely happened to you several times.

Personally, I've had verses that I couldn't reconcile with each other for over a decade, and then eventually the Spirit gave understanding, and I was overwhelmed with the wisdom of God. I had always believed them, and I knew, and freely admitted, that it was my lack of understanding that created the apparent conflict, and in every case this proved to be the truth. Where a problem or contradiction seems to exist in the scriptures, it is because of man's flawed or incomplete understanding, not because of an error in the scriptures. Being in complete agreement with the scriptures unfortunately doesn't mean having a complete and immediate understanding of all the wisdom that they contain, that takes a lifetime of diligent study, and much more still.

In this verse Paul says *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.* I wonder if we really grasp the full significance of this simple statement? Paul says that we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit *if* the Spirit of God dwells in us. Then he goes on to say the converse: *But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.* Do we get it, do we? We either **are**, or we **are not**, indwelt by the Spirit of God based entirely upon whether or not the Spirit (meaning heart attitudes and mindset) of God resides within us. If we are in perfect harmony with the mind of God (also called the mind of Christ) then, and only then, are we said to have the Spirit of God dwelling in us. And to make it perfectly clear, Paul then says that if we don't have this mindset that agrees with God on every matter, then He does not dwell in us and we do not belong to Him. It simply cannot be stated any more clearly. If we don't agree with God then we don't belong to God, that's so easy to understand, but so enormous in its consequence, that we just read over it lightly and refuse to seriously think about what it means. Does this really mean what it says? Surely this must be hyperbole, right?

If this verse actually, and literally means what it says, and I assert that it does, then the ramifications are enormous. For instance, if you personally, or your church knowingly accepts those who approve and practice lifestyles (particularly sexual ones) that the scriptures clearly forbid, or worse puts them in places of authority, then neither you nor your church can possibly have the mind of Christ, and therefore you cannot belong to Him. I'm not the one saying this, the Apostle Paul is saying it, and it's as clear as a bell. And again, if you or your church intentionally has females as pastors or teachers then neither you nor your church can possibly have the mind of Christ, and if you do not agree with Him, then you do not belong to Him. If this verse we're studying actually means what it says, then these things are undeniable, otherwise the verse simply isn't true. Not only is there no room to debate the merits of God's commandments, there is absolutely no motivation to do so, if we have His mindset (His Spirit) dwelling within us. No one who has the mind of Christ wishes to debate the issues of right and wrong with God, because they already fully agree with Him on everything. And this agreement is not simply an opinion, or a personal preference, it is the direct result of having been granted the gift of saving faith and being given a new heart and a new mind as a gracious gift of God.

It has always been the general practice of humans to just quickly breeze right over things that we read without really spending any time considering the full ramifications of what it says. We go right on to the next sentence, and then the next, and never even think about what we just read. Unfortunately most people do this same thing with the holy scriptures, and for this reason the depth of understanding is embarrassingly shallow and diverse. The scriptures are the words of God to us, given by divine inspiration, and do we think that we can read it like we read the Sunday newspaper? Just skim right over it and never dig down deep into the meaning and consequences. The problem we have is that when we do this it tells us things we sometimes don't want to know, or don't want to have to deal with, **unless** we've had our hearts and minds changed into conformity with that of Christ (and God) and then every word and every aspect is a treasure of understanding, with which we further comprehend and appreciate the wisdom and righteousness of God.

But, for those without the indwelling Spirit, the more they understand them the more they disagree with them. This is an unmistakable "tell" that we all have within us as to the authenticity of our claim of salvation; do we or don't we fully agree

with God on every aspect of scriptures? When we understand that being “in the Spirit” means that we have been completely and permanently transformed, regenerated, renewed, at the very basest level of our being, into perfect harmony with the mindset of Christ, then we understand the inescapable consequences and ramifications of what this means, and how it affects us and our entire way of thinking. One does not have the mind of Christ and simultaneously disagree with the teachings of Christ, this is not possible. Having the mind of Christ means agreeing with Him, without exceptions.

And failure to agree with Christ (and God) means that you do not have His Spirit within you, and therefore you do not belong to Him. Many would like to ignore this verse, or pretend that it doesn't say this, or that it doesn't really mean what it says, but that's not a credible argument, and the argument itself is evidence that you don't have the indwelling Spirit, or you wouldn't even want to argue with it in the first place.

All of us who are really Christians need some way to know who are our brothers and sisters and who are not, so that we know who to side with and team up with. This world, and our country in particular, is filled to overflowing with people and religions that claim the title Christian, but their actions, and especially their beliefs, give them away. No true Christian disagrees with the word of God on any issue whatsoever, particularly those of sin and righteousness. If the word of God calls it sin, then it is sin, and we immediately agree. And not just outwardly but in our innermost being, because this is what has been changed within us. Any group, or individual that truly feels and believes that the word of God is wrong on any issues of sin and morality, or simply just doesn't care what it says, this is not an individual or group that has the indwelling Spirit of Christ resident within them, and they do not belong to Him, no matter what they call themselves. The evidence proves otherwise. Do not align yourself with such as these, they will bring you harm. *Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals"* (1Co 15:33) Learn to be discerning, do not accept sinful behaviors as “loving” or as simply another interpretation of the meaning of scriptures. The mindset that wants to disobey the word of God, and find an excuse for doing it, cannot be indwelt with the Spirit of God, do you see this? The fallen flesh can lure us to commit sin, but it cannot ever make us like it, or agree with it, or want to do it, in our innermost being. If we actually approve of sin, and don't really believe that it is sin, then we are not “in the Spirit” and we do not belong to Him.

This is precisely what this sentence is saying, that the presence of the Spirit of God is proved or disproved by what our heart and mind approve or disapprove. If our mind still approves and desires those things that violate the word of God then we are still in the flesh; but if our mind has been permanently changed, and we joyfully concur with the Laws of God in our inner man, then it is because the Spirit of God has been imparted into us. This is why I said earlier that it really isn't a mystery to us whether or not we belong to God, because we know how we feel, and we know what we approve of and what we disapprove of, in our innermost being. And a partial agreement with the word of God is no agreement at all, because everybody on earth agrees with some part of it, but it's our full and joyful agreement with **all of it** that proves that the mind of Christ actually dwells within us. It is the absence of any disagreement that authenticates the presence of the Spirit.

Everyone who belongs to God totally agrees with God on everything that He says, without exception. In the case of theological issues there are differing perspectives on interpretation, but on issues of honesty and especially morality, the word of God is thoroughly clear and precise, in fact it's crystal clear, and no claims of differing interpretation are valid; on these issues there is either agreement or disagreement, and the difference is entirely based on whether one is in the flesh or in the Spirit. No one who has the mind of Christ believes in their heart that God's teachings on morality are wrong or unjust or unmerited. No one, because this is what Christ and God have taught, and it's what has been imparted (literally infused) into the mind of the believer through faith. This is the very meaning of being “in the Spirit.” If you don't agree, joyfully and totally with God on what He calls sin and righteousness, then you do not belong to Him, so says the Apostle Paul in these verses, by the authority and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. You may like it or you may dislike it, and you may agree or you may disagree, but you cannot deny that this is exactly what Paul has said. If you are “in the Spirit” then you joyfully concur, but if you're in the flesh you're probably trying to find some way to refute this, especially if you call yourself a Christian but you know that you don't really agree with all the things in the scriptures. But if you don't agree with the things in the scriptures it's because you don't share the mindset of the One who inspired those scriptures, and His Spirit is not in you, and you do not belong to Him. This is beyond argument exactly what Paul is telling us.

Those of you who know this ministry know that we speak candidly on the meaning of the scriptures, but never with an attitude of self-righteousness or holier than thou. When any verse of scripture is so very clear, so solidly black or white, it's because it was meant to be so, and as such it's the responsibility of the bible teacher to present it as clearly and accurately as possible, and never to water it down or soften the impact; so we've presented these verses in all of their candor and with all of the intended impact that they convey, because anything less would be negligence, and a flagrant disregard for the responsibility that we have to rightly divide the word of truth.

If these things that Paul has written in these verses are true, and we know that they are, then it's imperative that every person that thinks themselves to be a Christian hears these words, so that they have the information that's necessary to either confirm or refute that claim. I can think of nothing more tragic and heartbreaking than to spend your whole lifetime thinking you're a Christian, only to hear Christ declare at the final judgement "Depart from Me, I never knew you." (Mat 7:23)

If insulting you now, with the candor of this teaching, results in your taking a closer look at your life, and confessing to God that you do not really think like He thinks, and you do not really agree with Him on all matters that He has declared in His scriptures, **but that you are willing to do so**, if He will grant you repentance and saving faith. Then beloved, I will most gladly insult every human being on planet earth just to get a few who make such a confession and appeal to God. Just to snatch a few out of the fire. The Lord Jesus Christ was willing to infuriate most of the world just to save a few lost sheep that belonged to Himself and his Father. He set the precedent, we follow in His footsteps.

Conclusion:

We've been speaking in previous lessons of a lifestyle of obedience to the Law of God, and how that serves as an authenticator of what we actually believe in our hearts. Obedience tends to verify what we really believe, but it is what we believe, not what we do, that ultimately determines our eternal destiny. Unbelievers love to taunt believers by calling them self-righteous, and holding up their failures, and believers do have failures, but what they never fail at is what they believe, and how they feel about the word of God. Christians became such because they came to accept and confess that they are not self-righteous, and they are not able to be perfect, but they really and truly want to be in their heart, and sorely grieve over their inability to achieve it. No Christian claims self-righteousness, just the opposite, but every Christian understands and loves and desires the righteousness of God, and for this reason we always agree with the word of God on all matters of life and practice and morality, and for this the unbelievers love to call us self-righteous. But our righteousness is not from ourselves, and the unbelievers know that, but calling it self-righteousness is their way of denying that the source of true righteousness is from God and not from man. And therefore they aren't disobeying Almighty God, they're just disagreeing with other men. Our actions go a very long way toward revealing the true intent of our heart, but because we are still held captive in a fallen sinful body, our actions will occasionally not be consistent with our true inner desires and beliefs. What better examples than Moses, when he murdered the Egyptian slave master, or David when he took Bathsheba and had her husband Uriah murdered. If these small portions were all we knew of these two men then we would probably not consider them men of God, would we?

But irrespective of behaviors, there is one thing that never changes and never fails. These two men never lost their love and respect for God, and their sense of right and wrong, even in their worst situations. They never disagreed with God that they had sinned, and they did not try to justify their actions. Although their actions had failed, their faith in God had not. Their belief that God was pure and holy and righteous and merciful never faltered. David's Psalm 51 sets the standard for confession and repentance. Men and women fail, men and women sin, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, but the saving faith that's given by God never fails, because it is protected by the power of God, through faith, for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. (1Pet 1:5)

That thing that never fails is faith, and faith means, among other things, that we both believe and agree with God on every single matter that He has declared to us in His holy scriptures, without exception. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak, means that in our deepest and innermost parts we agree with God and want to keep every command He has given, but our bodies are incapable of achieving this goal. But the goal never fails, the desire never falters, and our agreement with God remains steadfast and unaltered, because that is precisely what is protected by God. Knowing this gives us the

discernment to confidently make evaluations, both in ourselves and in others. Knowing that disagreements among men over issues of men is normal, but disagreement with God over issues that He has clearly declared are only possible for those who do not have the same mindset as God, and therefore do not belong to Him.

For instance, if you're sitting in church and the person next to you is arguing that abortion, or same sex marriage, or homosexual behavior isn't really a sin, and calling you an unloving bigot for saying that it is, then you are not speaking with another Christian who simply disagrees with your point of view, you are speaking with a person that does not have the mind of Christ and does not belong to Him, you are speaking to an unbeliever, even if they're a deacon or the pastor. You cannot disagree with the declared word of God and have His Spirit resident within you at the same time. That is what Paul has just told us with absolute clarity. I've used these examples because they're the hot topics of this present day. But it applies equally to every declaration of scriptures, including women pastors and teachers, and every other matter of life and practice that's declared in the word of God.

You are only a Christian, meaning that you are born again of His Spirit, if indeed His Spirit dwells in you, and you have the mind of Christ on every matter of scripture. Then, and only then, do you belong to Him. There's no splitting the difference, or partial agreements, or conscientious objectors, these do not meet the definition. Those who are "in the Spirit" have the perfect mindset of Jesus Christ, because that mindset is not human but divine, and is given as a gift by the grace of God. (Eph 2:8-9) The New Covenant promise was *"I will put My Spirit in you."*

How one views the scriptures, and how one reacts to those scriptures, is perhaps the single most reliable indicator of whether or not they are "in the Spirit" meaning they have been born again of the Spirit of God, because being born again means precisely that, that the Spirit of God has been placed within our formerly sin damaged mind and now we think, feel and appreciate those things that God approves and we detest those things that God detests. Now of course we aren't as smart as God, and we don't know and understand everything that God knows, but whether we understand or not, we fully agree with Him because His Spirit has regenerated our puny human minds and adjusted them into harmony with His perfect mind. There are no people who are "in the Spirit" and also openly disagree with the word of God. As we've spent this whole lesson explaining, that is simply impossible. That is what Paul has told us in these verses.

Words have meanings, and we use words as the means of communicating pertinent facts from one person to another. Without words communications would be severely limited. Everything humanity has learned in our entire history has been preserved and transferred to others by the use of words. It makes progressive growth possible. Without words every generation would start at exactly the same point as their parents and take everything they learned to their grave with them. If we desire to learn, then we must read and pay careful attention to the words that have been recorded by our predecessors. Obviously not everything recorded in all books is true, but all useful truth is there among the collection. Everyone must decide which books contain truth and which do not, and when that decision is made then that book must be the guide. The Holy Spirit has been tasked by God the Father with the job of making the holy scriptures both fully trustworthy and progressively understandable to those whom He has chosen and redeemed. He is called the Helper, and He helps by guiding those who are redeemed into all truth (Jn 16:13) and the way that the Holy Spirit imparts divine truth to God's chosen is by providing them with understanding of the holy scriptures. The words of God are recorded in those scriptures, and they are as perfect as God Himself.

There is a huge difference between debating on how to properly interpret the words of scriptures precisely on some fine points, and outright disagreeing with those words. In the first case, all of those involved believe the words, but differ somewhat on precisely what they mean; but in the latter case there is admitted agreement of understanding of the words because the hearers flatly disagree with what they say. They don't disagree over what they mean, they disagree as to whether they're true and fair and just, or whether God has the rightful authority to enforce them. The first case is believers seeking to rightly understand the truth, the second is unbelievers refusing to acknowledge it as truth. They refuse to accept it because they don't like it, and therein lies the fatal "tell." If, when you do understand God's word, you find that you don't like it, or you don't agree with it, then can you have His mind residing in your mind? This is exactly what Paul has told us in the clearest and plainest language, *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.* Is the meaning of this statement unclear? Does

it have legitimately diverse possibilities? Can it mean something completely different from what it says?

The only legitimate challenge that I might recognize is that the phrase "*have the Spirit of Christ*" may not necessarily mean agreeing with Him in all respects. Well, I will agree that this term means a great deal more than just agreement, probably more that we can comprehend, but I assert that it cannot be void of this agreement and still have any real meaning at all. If, to have the Spirit of Christ does not include agreeing with Him, then what are we supposed to think that it does mean? If we can have His Spirit, and still think and appreciate and desire all the things we did before we were regenerated, then what exactly was regenerated? If rebirth and regeneration doesn't include our way of thinking and our deepest innermost desires, then it means nothing discernable to us whatsoever. From the human perspective, being born again, being regenerated, means our whole innermost being (mind, emotions, will, desires, affections) have been freed from its former love of sin and remade into a loving and willing slave of righteousness. In the simplest terms we have had a change of mind.

Later on in this epistle Paul will say *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.* (Rm 12:2) It is the act of bringing our thinking into perfect conformity with Christ's thinking that "having His Spirit" is all about. If we don't have that then we don't belong to Him. How difficult is that to understand? The answer is that it's not difficult, in fact it's so easy to understand that we're immediately shocked by the magnitude of its implications, and caught off guard as to what to do with it. If it's true then multitudes of our friends and church members that hold conflicting opinions to the scriptures on many of the moral issues of the day, are not really Christians at all, and that's precisely why they disagree, but can this be possible? Well, Paul says that it is. And even perhaps more shocking, what's our own situation, are we in full agreement with the teachings of scriptures, or do we also disagree with some things, even when we rightly understand what they mean?

Look, if you find yourself in disagreement with anything that the word of God says, then don't waste your time praying that God will change His mind, or that He'll overlook your disagreement, rather pray earnestly that He will grant you repentance of your disagreements, and by His Spirit, renew your mind into perfect harmony, perfect agreement, with His mind. This is justification, and salvation, and regeneration, this perfect agreement is the meaning of being "*in the Spirit*" and it is the work of God, performed entirely by His grace. The only way to obtain it is to ask Him for it. And when He grants it, He grants it in full measure. (Jn 3:34) *But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.* He who has an ear, let him hear. Amen.

Narrow Gate Baptist Church, Miami
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