

ROMANS BIBLE STUDY

Romans 8:09-11(b)

Lesson #20

Introduction

Last week we began studying chapter 8, verse 9, and I said that it was part of a group of verses that are so very clear that there's no possibility of misunderstanding what they mean. And the lesson went on to demonstrate the ramifications of that statement. We titled last week's lesson, If the Spirit of God Dwells in You, which we took directly from verse 9. So I've taken the title of this week's lesson from verse 11: (Reading verses 9-11)

Life to Our Mortal Bodies

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. (Rm 8:9-11)

Last week we covered verse 9 in detail, but I want to just briefly review that before going into verse 10. In verse 9 Paul makes a conditional statement. He says something is true **if** something else is also true, otherwise neither are true. He says that we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, **IF** the Spirit of God dwells in us, but if the Spirit of God does not dwell in us then we are still in the flesh, and we do not belong to God. Is it possible to say that any clearer? I don't know how. His indwelling Spirit is declared to be the sole deciding factor. We are His because He has put His Spirit within us, as the prophet Ezekiel foretold. (Eze 36:26-27) And in these verses the recognizable aspects of receiving His Spirit are said to be a new heart (meaning His mindset and His way of thinking) and a new affection and appreciation for His Laws that we will keep because we innately desire to do so. There's admittedly much more to receiving His Spirit than we can understand, but what we do understand is that once we have His Spirit placed within us, we begin to think and feel and behave just like His Son, Jesus Christ. It happens from the inside out, meaning what we believe and what we think and feel change first, and that internal change drives the external behaviors, in spite of the fallen and sinful flesh in which we still temporarily reside. That portion did not get renewed, (actually replaced) yet, but it will.

One of the main points we discussed last week was that the part of us that was reborn was the spiritual part of us only, meaning our cognitive mindset, our innate will, and beliefs, and desires. These were made permanently into conformity with that of Christ Jesus. Now there may be a few minor misconceptions right at first, but this is an instantaneous sweeping and massive change of thinking and feeling and appreciations and affections. It's a transfer from darkness into light, and the change is stark and sweeping. For some it might be a slower progression, but for others, myself included, it's like coming out from a pitch black hole into the full noonday sun in a matter of seconds, as far as our thinking is concerned. The flesh has not been replaced as yet, so our actions and behaviors are being progressively brought into conformity with those of Christ, but our mind (our spirit) has been perfectly and completely and permanently regenerated by the infusion of the Spirit of God, also called the Spirit of Christ, into our minds (Eze 36:26-27) by which we are made spiritually alive and declared to be His own possession, His own children. Alive in spirit, but still living in a body of dying flesh. And this is what Paul is going to speak about in the next couple of verses.

But first I want to repeat from last week, that the way anyone knows for sure if they belong to God and Christ is by whether or not they agree with what God has declared in His holy scriptures. Having His Spirit is having His mind and His way of thinking, and if we have His Spirit we cannot disagree with His words and Laws, not even one tiny bit. Because of our fallen flesh we admittedly can't keep them perfectly, but we agree with them perfectly, and we earnestly desire to be able to keep them perfectly. This is why I could tell you last week without reservations that all those who disagree with the word of God, and routinely practice those things that God has forbidden, do not have His Spirit dwelling in them, they cannot, and therefore they do not belong to Him. If you're in a church that disagrees with the scriptures over the moral and ethical issues of the day, and thinks and believes and behaves contrary to the teachings of scriptures, then you had best depart from that place, and arguing with them will be useless, because it is not a house of God, and those in attendance do not belong to Him. This is the inescapable conclusion of Paul's words in verse nine. Those who have an ear, let them hear.

Verse 10:

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

Again we have a conditional statement. If one thing is true then another is also true because the presence of the one assures the presence of the other. This is a cause and effect condition. If the cause is in place, then the resultant effect must also take place. The verse says that If Christ is in you (the cause) then your spirit is alive, (the effect) because of righteousness. And this is said to be in spite of the fact that the body is still dead because of sin. Paul says *yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness*. Have you ever wondered what he means by this statement? What has righteousness do with our being alive? Aren't we alive because of Jesus Christ? Of course we are, but it's His righteousness, accomplished by a perfect sinless life, then offered as a sin offering to God on our behalf, that vicariously restores our condition of righteousness. And it was our loss of righteousness (by the entrance of sin) in the Garden of Eden that caused the death of humanity in the first place. And it is the righteousness provided by Jesus Christ that removes the consequence of death from His redeemed, and makes new spiritual life possible. We are alive because of the restoration of righteousness through the life and works of Jesus Christ. Without righteousness there would be, and could be, no spiritual life at all, period. Therefore Paul says our spirit is alive because of righteousness, and we know that he means Christ's righteousness not ours. But righteousness had to be secured before new life could be infused. It was a mandatory prerequisite.

When the disciples of Christ were sad and bewildered by His statement that He was going to be put to death, they had no idea of the gravity of His words telling them that it was to their benefit that He suffer and die, because He knew that the indwelling spirit of life that would follow was dependent on His doing that very thing (death & resurrection) to restore righteousness to His chosen. The restoration of righteousness is the door to the restoration of life. Only Jesus Christ could open that door that had been shut and locked by the sin of mankind. And yes, that opened the door of righteousness for all who believe in Him, and brought new spiritual life to them. But like so many things that God has planned, not everything happens all at once. And this has confounded many people for centuries, even millennia. Paul says that our spirit has been made alive, but acknowledges that our bodies are still dead (meaning dying, void of eternal life) because of sin, meaning the sin that entered mankind through the fall of Adam and Eve, as well as those of each and every man and woman themselves.

Those of you who are familiar with this ministry have heard us speak of righteousness. In every age, and especially in this age in which we live, the term righteousness is rarely used. If it is then it's usually used in the secular context, and rarely in the biblical way. Contemporary righteousness is viewed as relative and personal, and is subject to anybody's own definition. What's righteous for me may not be what's righteous for you, we each decide for ourselves. This thinking exploded in the 1960's, I know because I was there, and I watched it with my own eyes and heard it with my own ears. Now, I'm not suggesting that our country was righteous before the 1960's I'm saying that the attitude toward righteousness, meaning biblical righteousness, was not nearly as hostile. Even those who didn't believe in God or in Jesus Christ, generally spoke respectfully towards the teachings of the scriptures and the followers of Jesus Christ. Last week I saw something on nation network television that I knew would someday come, the scriptures foretell of it, but it still saddened me beyond words, the writer and the actor spoke lines on national television that openly called God the most vile and vulgar names one can imagine, and then said that He should go to hell. This once semi-God friendly, or at least God tolerant nation has fallen into the practice of public declarations of defiance, defamation and outright hate for God, and hate for all of those who believe and follow Him. Just before his death Paul wrote to his disciple Timothy:

1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

2 Tim 3:1-4 (NASB)

And we've already studied Paul's previous words concerning humanity from this epistle to the Romans where he said: *"There is none righteous, not even one; 11 There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; 12 All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one." 13 "Their throat is an open grave, With their tongues they keep deceiving," "The poison of asps is under their lips"; 14 "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness"; 15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood, 16 Destruction and misery are in their paths, 17 And the path of peace they have not known." 18 **"There is no fear of God before their eyes."** (Rom 3:10-18)*

As sad as it is to see and hear our glorious and merciful God and Savior publically defiled and defamed on national television, the truth is that this has been prophesied as the inescapable situation as the end of this age draws closer and closer. We hate to see it and to hear it, but God has said that it must happen this way to fulfill all that's been planned in His creation. Evil must be allowed run its full course, to accomplish its intended purpose, and then be judged and forever recompensed and put away from the presence of God and His chosen children and worshipers. Yes, It will be very painful for us believers as we watch this unfold, and worse we ourselves will become the objects of these God hater's fury. In verse 18 Paul is going to speak of this. As biblical righteousness is rejected and abandoned, the quality of life will deteriorate as well. Our new high-tech toys will not bring us peace and contentment, neither internally nor externally. And the open defamation of God will not free mankind of oppression, it will deepen his enslavement to sin and lust and depravity and violence, and like a quicksand pit he will sink further and further until he disappears completely. This is what God has prophesied, and it will come to pass. There is no happy ending for God hating, unbelieving humanity. And unfortunately, for us God loving, righteousness loving believers, there is no living peacefully with them. They will not permit it.

A quick side note here. As a pastor of a national denomination I get various mailings from several groups. One of them in my state is currently organizing an effort whereby us Christian pastors are encouraged to take a public stand for biblical righteousness. I applaud this effort and wholehearted agree. But the stated objective is that we bring a revival of earlier morality that we think once existed. The pre-1960's kind of morality I suppose. While I approve of the advocacy of biblical morality, I cannot help but feel that the idea that we are actually going to change the direction of our nation's moral decline is unrealistic. It's kind of like the little child's prayer that everybody gets saved and nobody goes to hell. It's a sweet thought, but it doesn't line up with God's stated plans. By all means lets hold to and advocate biblical morality and righteousness, but also accept the fact that unbelieving humanity will never ever accept it, and will not allow any return to earlier morality. They have fought hard and long to get out from under it this far, and will not tolerate a return. It seems that just when we should be preaching to our fellow Christians that we must begin to prepare ourselves for difficult times, instead we're trying to pretend that we can avoid them. If the scriptures are true, and the end of the age is nearing, then that which is written will surely come to pass. So let's be mature and realistic, and begin to prepare ourselves and encourage one another to stand fast in our faith, and in what we have been taught about our Savior, in spite of what the world decides to do. Our treasure and our hope is not in this world but in another, where Jesus Christ reigns bodily forevermore, and where sin and temptation has been totally and forever banished. And this present world is not that place, and we'll never make it so. Suggesting that we can is not helpful, its counterproductive to an attitude of perseverance in the faith, and self-denial, and forsaking everything to follow after Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus told us Himself that if we continued to use His name, (as Lord and Savior) then the world will eventually hate us just as it hated Him, and will persecute us just as it did Him. (Mat 5:11, 10:22; Mk 13:13; Lk 6:22, 21:17; Jn 15:20) It's counterproductive, even maybe destructive, to pretend that unavoidable situations that have been destined to befall us (meaning humanity) can somehow be reversed or avoided. For instance, I just heard a short sound bite from one of the presidential candidates where he declared that he believes that America's best days are still ahead of us. Now, either this candidate has just arrived on our planet in the last few months, from a far distant galaxy, or he is hopelessly deluded. With a seventeen trillion dollar national debt (not counting Medicare and Social Security) that's climbing by the second, and showing no likelihood of stopping, and national morality being literally redefined before our eyes, do we actually believe that there are only good things on our horizon? Is there even one person above the age of 12 who actually believes this, besides this candidate? We have spent ourselves into hopeless oblivion, and we have abandoned our God, and now we really think that prosperity lies in our future? Are we really that far gone? Have our mind's ceased to function? Well, yes just as Paul described in chapter 1, verses 18 through 32. We stopped honoring God and He gave us depraved minds.

I'm saying this because I want to make it clear that the public abandonment of righteousness is by divine consequence also the abandonment of life, and the abandonment of peace, and the abandonment of prosperity. The absence of righteousness, meaning biblical righteousness is the root cause of the loss of life and peace and prosperity and happiness. These are all directly related. God is allowing this degradation to happen, yea He has even determined it, to prove a point to His creation. To prove the value and necessity of righteousness, and to visibly demonstrate what happens when it's lost. There are several things that have to change to make a fallen sinner into a willing follower and worshiper of God.

First, there is the necessity for a complete change of mind and soul and beliefs and desires and affections. In other words a complete change of our inner self which we call our spirit or our soul or our self. Even if a sinner were brought into heaven they would not be happy there. Everything they still love and desire would be prohibited, and all those things that are required they would hate. This is not anybody's idea of heaven, including God's. For the occupants of heaven to be happy and joyful and appreciative and worshipful they must be overjoyed with their place and position and all the rules that apply there. It is the total agreement with God, and genuine affection and appreciation for Him that makes the occupants of heaven glad to be there. Now nobody wants to go to hell, so heaven is infinitely better, but that doesn't necessarily mean that one would be happy there. They'd just be glad they weren't in hell. So the first thing necessary is a total change of heart and mind that agrees with God and desires all those things that He desires and hates everything that He hates. This is a must, and this is the first thing that we become aware of when we're justified and regenerated. We think and feel entirely differently than before, and we no longer agree with the secular worldview on morality and righteousness. Righteousness of thinking and desires is restored to us by the act of God, whereby He puts His Spirit within us, and He would not do that until atonement for sin had been made, and justification occurred, and righteousness restored.

I have said in the past, and now repeat, that the greatest gift that we ourselves actually receive from God is that of righteousness. And not just outward but inward. A love and desire and appreciation for righteousness, because we learned from our experience on earth, that there is no possibility of acquiring it anywhere else in the universe, and the devastating consequences of not having it. There is only life (speaking of eternal spiritual life) where there is righteousness, life is lost outside of this boundary. But even more, it is the source of peace and happiness and contentment. The world and all its sin brought nothing but fleeting pleasures, but it did not bring lasting peace and dignity and happiness. No matter how much we got, it still left us unfulfilled, still wanting and empty. Sin's promise of happiness is a bald faced lie, (repeat) and our life on earth proved that to us beyond any shadow of a doubt. God knew it already, but now we know it also, because we've learned it firsthand. Jesus summed it up well when He said that we are to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and then everything else we need for life will be provided. (Mat 6:33) His kingdom is the place, and His righteousness is the object of our pursuit. Everything is summed up and rolled into these two items.

What makes something valuable? Why do we put varying values on different things? Well, usually because of how useful we think it will be to us, and how difficult it is to get it. That's why diamonds are more valuable than rocks. Now sometimes rocks might be more useful than diamonds, but since rocks are plentiful, and we can just pick them up off the ground, they aren't considered particularly valuable. So, value is attached based on our perception of usefulness and our understanding of the difficulty of acquisition. So, how useful is righteousness? Well, here on earth it might be argued that it isn't very useful, maybe even a hindrance, unless of course we derive some personal pleasure from it, and contentment in having it. But what if we find out that life itself hinges upon our having it, and our eternal destiny of heaven or hell lies in the balance? Does this change our perception of its value? And then add to this the fact that there isn't a single molecule of it on this earth or in this universe, now how valuable do we perceive it to be? It's essential for life, but none is available in our universe. This is precisely how valuable it is, because these circumstances are entirely true.

The gift of God's righteousness opens the door to eternal life and it's not available from any source within the created universe. Acquiring it will bring eternal life and peace and joy unspeakable to all who are among the blessed of God. This is righteousness, divine Godly righteousness, and it's God's most valuable gift to His beloved children. To give it to us, cost Him the suffering and humiliating death of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. So, God surely knows the value of it, even if we can't fully comprehend it. Once righteousness is attained, then there's the last element. That final touch that brings completion to His masterpiece of creation.

Verse 11:

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.

Our spirit (our mindset and thinking) has already been entirely and eternally renewed into the likeness of Christ, but our flesh bodies are still the organic container in which those renewed minds reside. This is no cakewalk, the conflict between the two is fierce and unrelenting. As long as we remain in these bodies we cannot achieve what our renewed mind's want to do. Paul describes this situation in these words:

21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. 22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, 23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. And then cries out in frustration:
24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? And supplies the answer to his own question with the words: *25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!* This is the situation of every born again believer, *on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.*

It is from within this very context that Paul is now speaking of Christ giving life to our mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwells within us. This is our blessed hope of His glorious catching away of His saints to be with Him up off of the earth. (1The 4:13-18) And In 1st Corinthians 15, where he's speaking of our bodily resurrection, Paul says:

50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. [physically, bodily changed] 53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1Cor 15:50-57)

This verse that we're studying in Romans, and these reference verses from 1st Corinthians are all speaking of the same thing, of the end of the relentless war for us against our fallen flesh. They're about the second half of our redemption. The first half, our spirit, (our mind) has already been redeemed, and eventually we will also get new undefiled and immortal bodies that match our renewed spirit. This present body of death will be removed and a new undefiled body of eternal life will be granted to all who believe in Jesus Christ. The strangle hold that sin had upon our flesh is finally broken, and we are free to live forever in perfect wilful obedience to God. We will share His righteousness and we will share a body that is made in the likeness of Christ's glorious body. In his epistle to the Philippians Paul wrote: *20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.* (Phi 3:20-21) And then the apostle John said: *2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.* (1Jn 3:2) At that point we will have been conformed to the image of Christ, both internally and externally. (Rm 8:29) Internally in as much as we have the mind of Christ, and externally in as much as our bodies will also have those same heavenly attributes that afford eternal life, and very many, as yet, un-imagined other capabilities. (1Co 2:9)

But the overriding point here is that we will be thoroughly and entirely redeemed. Our whole being will be a heavenly being, and no vestige whatsoever of sin or defilement will be present, ever again. We will be exactly where we want to be, and we will love everything that God loves, and we will hate everything that God hates, and unrighteousness and sin will have completed their designated tasks, and we will be mature and educated and grateful worshipers of God. We will know the value of His gift of righteousness, and we will know the consequences of rejecting it, because we will have actually seen it and lived it for ourselves.

This is the most sensible and logical answer as to why God has allowed sin into His creation, to show His chosen ones what righteousness is, and to show us why there's a line of demarcation between good and evil, between sin and righteousness, that cannot be crossed without the loss of everything that makes life possible and valuable. No one can possibly worship God acceptably, in spirit and in full truth, apart from this knowledge and comprehension of the value of His righteousness.

Heaven is only heaven because it is perfectly righteous, otherwise it would be something else entirely, even if it were eternal. The Lake of Fire is eternal, but it surely isn't heaven. So what's the difference? Righteousness is the difference, it defines heaven because it defines God Himself. If you don't earnestly desire it, then His Spirit is not in you, and you do not belong to Him.

If this is your case then I strongly urge you not to deny it, or fake it, or pretend, but to confess it to God, and plead with Him for repentance and faith, and for the earnest desire for His righteousness, without which no one will ever enter into His kingdom. Those who ask in humility and honesty, because they are being drawn by His effectual calling, do not get turned away. So don't be too proud, don't be embarrassed, just ask Him for repentance and faith. That's all you can do.

If God decides to show His mercy on this country and extend its life of prosperity, and postpones its deserved judgement, then the way that He will improve our morality is not in the voting booths but in the churches, by a response to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the desire and appreciation for divine righteousness. But to be honest, I just don't see any signs that this is forthcoming, just the opposite, and therefore I suggest that we, the pastors of the churches, begin to preach about persevering in our faith, and learning what it actually means to seek first God's kingdom and God's righteousness, rather than spending our time making plans for fixing this condemned world. Because our treasure had better be elsewhere.

Let me close with some words from Jesus Christ concerning what it actually means to be one of His, and to have His Spirit dwelling within us. Those who have the mind of Christ, and who will get those eternal resurrection bodies that Paul has described:

24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. 25 "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

Matt 16:24-26 (NASB)

To Him be the glory forever.

Amen.

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09/02/12