

Romans (37): Two Ways of Living

Introduction

We are in Romans 8 in our study of this epistle. We have already considered in verses 1 through 8 that there is no condemnation for the ones whom God is sanctifying by the Holy Spirit. And now in verses 9 and following we see Paul more clearly contrasting the two different ways of living, the life of the Christian, who is being sanctified, and the life of the non-Christian, who is living for self. He explains that the primary cause of distinction between the true believer and all others is the presence and work of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Christian lives according to the law of God as he is empowered by the Holy Spirit; the non-Christian lives according to his flesh, that is, according to his own will, his sinful self, for he does not have the Holy Spirit indwelling him. The one who is being sanctified will inherit everlasting life; the one who is not being sanctified will die in his sins.

The paragraph we want to consider today is Romans 8:9-13, but it needs to be read in context, so we will begin reading with verse 1.

¹There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If 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.

It is clear that the apostle is comparing and contrasting the true Christian from all others. Paul stated in **verse 9** that the Christians that He was addressing were not “in the flesh”, but “in the Spirit.” ***“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.”***

Paul describes the non-Christian as “in the flesh.” The Christian is “in the Spirit.” And so, by definition here, a Christian is spiritual in nature and the non-Christian of the flesh in nature. It is a description of the Christian being an inhabitant of another age, the promised age, the age of salvation, the age of the Spirit. The non-Christian remains dwelling in this fallen world in the former age prior to the coming of Christ.

The contrast between being “in the flesh” and “in the Spirit” is a contrast belonging to the old age of sin and death and belonging to the new age of righteousness and life. So characteristic of these respective “ages” or “realms” are flesh and Spirit that the person belonging to one or the other can be said to be “in” them. In this sense, then, no Christian can be “in the flesh”; and all Christians

are, by definition, “in the Spirit.” We miss Paul’s intention if we think of being “in the flesh” here as the condition of mortality that continues to characterize even believers, or as the moral weakness and proneness to sin that, more lamentably, we still possess. For the rest of the verse makes it absolutely clear that (1) to be a Christian is to be indwelt by God’s Spirit; and (2) to be indwelt by God’s Spirit means to be “in the Spirit” and not “in the flesh.” Paul’s language is “positional”: he is depicting the believer’s status in Christ, secured for him or her at conversion.¹

The primary point of emphasis is the importance of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit dwells within you, you are a Christian. If the Holy Spirit does not dwell in you, you are not a Christian. If you do not have the Spirit of Christ, that is, the Holy Spirit, then you do not belong to Him; He does not own you as His possession.

But how do you know if the Holy Spirit dwells within you? The answer is that you can know for certain *if the Holy Spirit is performing His work of grace of sanctification in your life*. Now it is extremely important, therefore, to identify and distinguish what is a true inward work of grace from that which is not, for there is the possibility of counterfeiting to a degree what is spiritual. This is vitally important because people who are unregenerate, who do not have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, can appear to themselves and to others as though they knew the Lord in salvation. There are many self-deceived both in and outside of the church. But upon close scrutiny using the Holy Scriptures as the standard, it may be discovered that they clearly fall short of what God’s Word declares is characteristic of people who are being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Unregenerate people and appear to be like regenerate people; that is, those who have never been born again can appear to the untrained eye to be born again. But sadly, people who are not being sanctified may have a form of godliness (2 Tim. 2:5), may pray frequently and long (Matt. 23:14), may fast often (Luke 18:12), may hear the Word gladly (Mark 6:20), may be zealous for the work of God (Matt. 7:21ff), may be very knowledgeable about the Word of God (John 3), and may teach others the Word of God (Jude, 2 Peter 2). And so, let us consider what a true work of sanctification by the Holy Spirit looks like in the true believer, the true child of God.²

1. The sanctification of the Holy Spirit begins with the sinner’s regeneration. This work of sanctification by the Holy Spirit begins when He causes a sinner to become born again. The Holy Spirit places within a spiritually dead, insensitive, uncaring, uninterested sinner, the principle of a holy life. It is described as a new nature, a new heart, a new man, and a new creation. The result of this sanctification of the Spirit is a whole new view of one’s self, one’s desires, and one’s purposes. The result of this imparting of new life is a whole new direction in life, one that will lead the sinner on the highway of holiness that will lead him into everlasting life.

The sanctification of the Spirit is not a mere outward reformation of behavior, and appearance of conformity to the law of God, as say, the Pharisees. The righteousness produced by the sanctification of the Spirit exceeds theirs, for it is internal. Nor is it a restraint from sin due only to a new and fearful realization of the wrath of God upon sin. Restraining grace need not be sanctifying grace. God sometimes restrains people from living in sin due to the influence of parents, church, and society’s laws. But this is not the sanctification of the Spirit.

The sanctification of the Spirit is not the same as the gifts of the Spirit. The gifts of a preacher, the gifts of someone who claims to have revelations from God, or the power to heal, may accompany an un sanctified man, an unregenerate man. Some might speak miraculously with the tongues of men (and perhaps angels?) and have no work of sanctifying grace in their hearts (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1ff).

¹ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (William B. Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 489f.

² The following teaching respecting the believer’s sanctification is gleaned from John Gill, *A Body of Divinity*, in the division of “A Body of Practical Divinity”, book 6, chapter 14 (Turner Lassitter, 1965, 3rd reprint), pp. 552ff.

The sanctification of the Spirit is not merely a moral renovation of one's life. Sanctification may not be present in a man who gives up a sin or two, even many. Moral sinners need to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit as well as immoral ones. Those who are moral, however, do not see their need as greatly as the immoral.

No, sanctification begins with the Holy Spirit imparting new life in the soul of a sinner resulting in a gradual and progressive transformation of his person into a holy man. It is a work of grace of the Holy Spirit in the soul of a sinner that results in his sanctification.

2. The sanctification of the Spirit is evidenced in the desires and attitudes of the believer toward God. What are the evidences of the sanctification of the Holy Spirit?

1) There is *a new attitude and outlook of the soul toward God and the things of God*. There is a genuine desire and concern to know God, please God, and walk with God. Before, there was no fear of God before his eyes; but with the beginning of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, a desire and a holy fear or reverence begins to capture his heart. The man who has been given a new heart in regeneration cannot do what he did before with clear conscience. He finds himself doing things that he would have never considered doing before. He has a respect for God and God's name that he did not have before. He becomes concerned when he hears God's name dishonored or misrepresented. He becomes increasingly aware that his life is being lived out in the sight of God and that it matters to God how he not only behaves, but how he feels and thinks. The one thief hanging on the cross next to Jesus gave this evidence that he was born again. When he heard the other thief deride Jesus, he betrayed his fear of God.

³⁹Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." ⁴⁰But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?" (Luke 23:39f)

2) There develops in his soul a true *love for God*. He finds himself delighting in Him. He talks thinks of God. He talks with God. He wants to talk with others about God. Job wrote of the hypocrite, "Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?" But if that hypocrite ever becomes the object of the Holy Spirit's sanctifying grace, he will.

3) There develops in his heart and life *compliance to God's will*. He begins to understand and see the presence of an all-powerful God who has a purpose in this world acting in the affairs of his own life. He murmurs less. He is distressed less. He is more at ease in difficult situations. He is less concerned for revenge or for demanding his own rights, for he has come to see that he is not deserving of the least of God's mercies. There is a conforming of his desires to God's desires. He finds himself loving the things God loves and hating the things God hates.

4) He increasingly becomes a *thankful man*. **Thomas Watson** described the thankful man:

And as a godly man expresses thankfulness in every duty, he does so in every condition. He will be thankful in adversity as well as prosperity: *'In every thing give thanks'* (1 Thess. 5:18). A gracious soul (*i.e.* one which has been saved by grace) is thankful and rejoices that he is drawn nearer to God, though it be by the cords of affliction. When it goes well with him, he praises God's mercy; when it goes badly with him, he magnifies God's justice. When God has a rod in his hand, a godly man will have a psalm in his mouth. The devil's smiting of Job was like striking a musical instrument; he sounded forth praise: *'The Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord'* (Job 1:21).

5) He becomes a *praying man*. He sees his dependence on the Almighty, and so, he makes his requests to God knowing that He is able to give him the things for which he is truly needful. But it is not just a sense of need that sends him praying, it is a desire for communion with God that moves him to talk with God.

6) He becomes a man who seeks to be with *God's people*. There is an attraction toward them that knits his heart with them. He desires and enjoys the Word of God preached and discussed. He belongs among them and feels at home with them.

7) He becomes a man who desires *the glory of God*. The unsanctified man only acts holy before others to be seen of others. The sanctified man, however, shrinks from being seen of men. He desires that God might increase, even if it means his own decrease. His Christianity is not one of outward show so as to puff himself up in the eyes of others; he is content to do his good deeds in secret and see the recipient bless God for God's blessing.

2. The sanctification of the Spirit is evidenced in the desires and attitudes of the believer toward Jesus Christ. The person being sanctified by the Holy Spirit looks to Jesus Christ as his all in all. He sees a sufficiency in the Lord Jesus for every spiritual need that he has--and they are many. He looks to Jesus for pardon and cleansing from sin. He looks to Jesus for comfort in his sorrow, strength in his difficulty, for encouragement in his distress. He looks to Jesus to guide and instruct him. He sees Jesus as His *Prophet*-- he looks to Jesus to cleanse him of his guilt and pollution. He sees Jesus as His *Priest*-- he subjects himself to Jesus as His Lord and orders his life according to his will. He sees Jesus as his *King*-- the person becoming sanctified sees in Jesus all the perfections of grace that he desires for himself, so he desires and seeks conformity to him in thought, attitude, and action.

3. The sanctification of the Spirit is evidenced in the desires and attitudes of the believer toward the things of the Holy Spirit. Now a word of clarification is important here. When we say that the one being sanctified desires the things of the Spirit, we are not saying that the Spirit Himself is the focus of His attention. We say this because the Holy Spirit does not move men to seek Him, but rather He moves men to seek Christ. And so, it is "the things of the Spirit" that are desired by those who are being sanctified by the Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:5; 1 Cor. 2:1). What do these things of the Spirit include?

1) They desire to walk after the Spirit; that is, to walk in the way of holiness (Rom. 8:4).

2) They look to the power of the Spirit to enable them to do the things commanded of them. God gave us the desire to please Him when we were born again. But He only gives us the power to do those things as the Holy Spirit enables us. When the challenge arises, Christians look to Christ for the power of the Holy Spirit.

3) They walk daily as they are being directed and taught by the Holy Spirit in the Holy Scriptures.

4. The sanctification of the Spirit is evidenced in the attitudes and opinions of the believer toward sin.

1) Because He sees the Bible as God's Word, He approves of what it says about sin and its penalty. He agrees with the word as to what defines sin. The unsanctified man cannot be subject to the law of God; it is not possible for him (Rom. 7:12). But the sanctified man cannot be otherwise. He approves of the Lord's declarations in His law. He sees God's law as holy, just, and good.

2) He hates sin and is grieved deeply by it. The world cannot know how the believer who is being sanctified by the Spirit feels toward the things that it wants them to approve and celebrate. Last evening it was announced that the queen of Great Britain will formerly go on record promoting gay and lesbian rights. The world rejoices in this. The world sees our disapproval of sin as arrogant, bigoted, and ignorant. We are moved by blind fear and hatred, they say. No, we by the Spirit were made subject to the law of God in our innermost being and we cannot have it otherwise, nor would we want to have it so.

3) The believer being sanctified hates sin most in himself. The unsanctified man does not hate sin in himself; rather, he cherishes it. Oh, he might be ashamed of it, but he loves it still. It has a power over him that leads him everywhere it would take him. Sin may also have great influence in the life of the persons being sanctified, but he screams against himself and it as he is caught and drug to sin's lair. He does not go willingly, but rather with regret and resistance.

4) The believer being sanctified is concerned about his tongue, what he says. He knows that a fountain cannot send forth at the same place and time sweet water and bitter (James 3:11). When he sins with his tongue he is smitten in his conscience.

5) The one being sanctified is concerned about his relationship with his brothers and sisters in Christ. His own peace is disturbed when peace between himself and the Christian brethren is disturbed. The one who is unsanctified does not want to be even seen with the people of God, yet alone being identified with them. When they hear what it is the people of God believe and value they are like the people of Jerusalem in the days of the early church: "None of the rest dared join them" (Acts 5:13).

6) The one being sanctified will seek to break off from his old sins and the places and people that would lead him into old sins. He strives against sin. It is warfare for him. He wages regular battles against sin in which he does not always win. But when he does suffer defeat, he gathers himself up and enters the fray once again, waging the good warfare for Christ.

7) The one being sanctified loathes his weakness and failings. He is not as others who can easily justify themselves. He sometimes is thrown into despair because of the deepness of his remorse.

8) He longs to be free from the power of sin in his life. If he had his wish, he would never sin again. He looks forward to the day when Christ returns and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit will be perfected in Him.

Do you not see how all of these characteristics cannot arise from anyone but that man or woman, boy or girl, who is being sanctified by the Holy Spirit? **John Gill**, from whom I gleaned much of these descriptions, said it this way:

Now can such actings in the mind, and in life, spring from nature? Must they not arise from a principle of holiness in the heart? Can there be such reverence of God, love to him, resignation to his will, affectionate and fervent devotion to him, desires of communion with him, and a concern in all things for his glory, without a supernatural principle of grace and holiness in the soul? Is it possible, that an unsanctified man should ever apply to Christ for cleansing, be subject to him as King, be desirous of walking as he walked, and of being wrought up to conformity to him? Or be concerned to mind the things of the Spirit, and to walk after the Spirit, and to live in him, and be careful not to grieve him? can there be such actings in the mind concerning sin, as to love the law, which forbids it; to dislike sin, abhor it, and hate it; engage in an opposition to it, abstain from it, lament it, and earnestly desire to be rid of it; can these be the produce of nature? Or be without being internally sanctified by the Spirit of God?

Of course the answer is “No.” The sinner must be the recipient of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit for these graces to be seen in the life. And so, Paul stated in Romans 8:9, “***Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.***”

Now there are many, many professing Christians who believe and teach that the way to determine if one has the Holy Spirit is if one has spoken in an unknown tongue, and as they describe that, it is a heavenly language, or a prayer language. Many teach that since the Word of God teaches as here (Rom. 10:9) that if you do not have the Holy Spirit that you do not belong to Him, then to speak in an unknown tongue is necessary in order to have salvation. This is not a universal teaching among Pentecostals but it is a common teaching. This is so far from what the Bible teaches about true faith in salvation, that we might question the salvation of those who teach such things. The one who has the Holy Spirit is one who is being conformed to Jesus Christ in holy character, not because he speaks in an “unknown tongue.”

Let us consider next Paul’s statement in **Romans 8:10**: “***But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.***” Paul was stating that even though the Christian’s body is subject to death due to sin, because the Holy Spirit dwells within that body, that Christian will experience life.

Paul declared that “***the body is dead because of sin.***” What did he mean by this? He was likely expressing the reality that even though Christians have been given new life; nevertheless, their bodies are still subject to physical death. Because of sin, your physical body will die. It cannot continue into eternity. Sin has ruined its fitness for eternity.

The eschatological tension of Pauline theology manifests itself here. The Spirit indwells believers and they are no longer slaves of sin, yet they still die because of sin. Sin is no longer the master over believers, but this does not mean that sin is nonexistent. The physical body of believers (which includes the whole person) indicates that Christians are still part of the old age, even though they possess the new-age gift of the Spirit. Full redemption will come at the day of resurrection when all sin and weakness will be left behind.³

In contrast to the “the body is dead because of sin”, we read that “***the Spirit is life because of righteousness.***” You may notice that the English Standard Version (ESV) that we are using capitalizes the word, “Spirit”, meaning that the translators believed that Paul originally meant the Holy Spirit in the clause. Some have taken another position, saying that the “the spirit (lower case) is life because of righteousness” is a reference to the human spirit having been given life. And so, in the first clause it speaks of the Christian’s body that must die, but the second clause speaks of the Christians spirit that is alive unto God.⁴ But this is not correct. Paul was contrasting the body of the Christian that dies with the Holy Spirit that gives life. The word “Spirit” is a reference to the Holy Spirit throughout this context.

What is meant by “***life***” here? He is alluding to eternal life that will commence at the future resurrection. This would fit the idea of physical death in the first clause and resurrection life in the second clause.

³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Academic, 1998), p. 414.

⁴ Of all the major English translations only the New American Standard Version uses the lower case “spirit” in this verse to refer to the Christian’s human spirit.

The reference is probably to the resurrection. The presence of the Spirit demonstrates that believers will not be saddled with their weak and corruptible bodies forever. The Spirit is a life-giving Spirit and will overcome death through the resurrection of the body.⁵

When Paul wrote that the Spirit is life “*because of righteousness*”, there are two possibilities for his original meaning. First, it may be that he was stating that the Spirit is life because He enables the believer to live in righteousness; in other words, the believer is being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. This idea is certainly declared elsewhere in this passage. But here, Paul was asserting that God will raise believers from the dead through the power of the Holy Spirit because of the gift of righteousness that He has granted through faith alone to the account of His people. It is due to the righteousness of Jesus Christ that the Spirit is able to impart “life” to the Christian.

Now notice that where Paul had referenced in verse 9 the Holy Spirit as “the Spirit of Christ”, here in verse 10 he speaks of Christ in you. Jesus Christ dwells in the believer through the Holy Spirit. In fact, let us stand back and look at this entire paragraph we read earlier and consider the identification and description of the Three Persons of the Godhead that Paul employs.

⁹You, however, are not in the flesh but in *the Spirit*, if in fact *the Spirit of God* dwells in you. Anyone who does not have *the Spirit of Christ* does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, *the Spirit is life* because of righteousness. ¹¹If *the Spirit of Him* (i.e. the Father) who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, *He* (the Father) who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through *His Spirit* who dwells in you.

In these verses we read of the Holy Spirit being associated with God the Father, God the Son--Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit Himself. The language that Paul uses shows forth the relationship between the three persons of the Holy Trinity. This does not mean that there is no relative distinction between them, but it does show their common essence as one God who manifests Himself in three persons.

This variation of terms shows that the indwelling of the Spirit of God, having the Spirit of Christ, and Christ in us are all to the same effect. This does not mean, however, that there is any blurring of the distinction between Christ and the Holy Spirit. Neither does it eliminate the distinctive modes of indwelling or the distinctive operations of the respective persons of the Godhead. But it does underline the intimacy of the relationship that exists between Christ and the Holy Spirit in that union by which the believer becomes the habitation of both.⁶

Now let us look at **Romans 8:11**: “*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.*” Here Paul links the future resurrection to be certain for the believer because of the work of the Holy Spirit that is being conducted in his life. If God has begun a good work in you of sanctification, He will continue to perform that work, culminating in the future bodily resurrection from the dead. Here we see all Three Persons of the blessed Holy Trinity operative in the salvation of His people. *God the Father* will one day give life to your mortal bodies.⁷ He had formerly raised Jesus from the dead. He will one day through the Holy Spirit resurrect our mortal bodies so that they will no longer be subject to death or corruption.

⁵ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Academic, 1998), p. 415.

⁶ John Murray, *Romans*, vol. 1 (Eerdmans, 1959), pp. 288f.

⁷ Thus making our mortal bodies to become immortal. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:53f.

The leading thought of the whole verse may be set forth thus. (1) The Father raised up Christ. (2) The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father when the Father is contemplated in this specific capacity as the one who raised up Jesus. (3) The Holy Spirit indwells believers and dwells in them as the Spirit of the Father. (4) This indwelling of the Spirit, since it is an indwelling of the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus, guarantees the resurrection from the dead of those thus indwelt.⁸

We must close here. But what may we say by way of application? Paul expressed the application in the verses that follow, which we will examine in detail next Lord's Day, Lord willing. But let us take these words with us now and reflect upon their meaning and importance in the light of what we have considered today:

¹²So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Next Lord's Day we will consider how we defeat sin in life in accordance with these words.

May God be praised for His unspeakable gift of life in His Son that is brought to realization in our lives by the blessed Holy Spirit.

⁸ Murray, p. 292.