



HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:7-9

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THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ROMANS 8:7-9

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In beginning the exposition of these verses, I feel somewhat compelled to preempt the exposition with some preliminary observations and comments and there may be some strong negative reaction to what is said. The comments may be considered insensitive, undiscerning, arrogant, unintelligent, and probably somewhat self-righteous simply because I am not willing to fall in alignment with the direction of much of modern Christianity, and especially on those churches which have become much more focused on experience rather than the truth.

It seems that in a Christian culture that feeds more on experience than it does on truth that a certain kind of Christian can be perceived as an individual, or as a church, that quenches the Holy Spirit. They can be seen as being insensitive to people's felt needs simply because they are so committed to the exposition of the Word of God. The ultimate criticism would not be that they are faithful to teaching the Word, but rather that they are closed to the fresh and anointed work of the Holy Spirit and that in so doing that they actually quench the Holy Spirit. From a personal level and perspective, if the reading of the Word of God and the faithful exposition of the Word of God is what quenches the Holy Spirit, then I would be guilty as charged.

Unfortunately, there seems to be a great deal of modern Christianity that appears to be so far outside of the boundaries of authentic Christianity that it is terribly frightening. Many people see the work of the Holy Spirit as that of making them happy, or of getting them into a state of uncontrollable laughter, or knocking people on the floor, or of causing people to become emotionally out of control, or of always singing praise songs. In many charismatic and Pentecostal circles, the work of the Holy Spirit seems to be that of always healing people, or of getting them to speak in tongues, or making sure that they have a happy-clappy experience when they come to church. Unfortunately, if they do not have that kind of emotional experience, then they just do not believe that they have had a meaningful time in church.

So what happens is that truth takes a back seat to experience, and in churches where the services revolve around the teaching and exposition of the Word of God, they appear to be just plain boring to many people and certainly not addressing their real felt needs. For some reason the critics believe that what ministry really is is that of meeting people's needs. Is not that why people are supposed to come to church – so that their needs can be met? Well, if that is the case, then most likely someone is preaching a man-centered gospel and not a God-centered gospel, and immediately many Bible teaching / preaching churches are criticized because they are not meeting people's felt needs and ultimately those individuals are not having a meaningful worship experience.

The obvious question would be this – “*Should not a worship service be an uplifting experience?*” with the operative word being “**experience**”. However, **there is nothing in Scripture that says that a worship service is supposed to be uplifting**. If you disagree with that, I challenge you to bear it out with Scripture. Certainly I am not saying that it is wrong for a service to be uplifting – for certainly it is not. I am not opposed to uplifting music, or uplifting testimonies, or uplifting anything. To the



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contrary, at a personal level I like being encouraged in my faith. **But the primary purpose of a worship service is to honor the Word of God and the truth in that Word that transforms people's lives.**

The truth of the matter is that when the church meets for worship and the preaching of the Word that it is God's hour and not ours. The object of worship is God, not what worship can do for the believer. The problem is that many want God to reciprocate, but true worship is for God and toward God. True worship is not an "even-steven" trade where believers give to God and now He has to give back to them. Not at all. That certainly may happen if God so chooses, but worship is always about God and about giving God the honor and glory that is rightfully due His name. It is never about believers and what they get from it, and if they do not understand that, then they will never truly understand worship. [John 4:23-24](#) says,

²³But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

If the truth of God's Word is not the center of a church's priorities, then the true worship of God cannot really happen. **Believers cannot worship God apart from the truth.** The truth and worship are inseparable. True worship is not possible without the truth. The truth is utterly foundational to any kind of meaningful worship. It could be stated this way – the truth should cause believers to worship!

There will be many times when someone may not leave church uplifted, but rather deeply convicted and challenged and confronted by the truth. In fact, that should actually more of the norm. Paul stated it this way in [Acts 20:32](#),

³²"So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified

Obviously, John the Baptist was not in the business of making people feel good about themselves. Peter's sermons in Acts are not what can be defined as uplifting. Paul certainly minced no words in his messages to the Corinthians or the Galatians. In fact, he asked the Galatians who had actually "**bewitched**" them. Most of the time when Jesus taught, people were angered, convicted, and eventually turned away from following Him. Paul told Timothy in [2 Timothy 4:1-2](#),

¹I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: ²Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

For many people if they do not receive some kind of "spiritual buzz" in a service, then they simply feel cheated. Once again, at a personal level I believe the exact opposite. If what someone mostly gets in a church service is some kind of an emotional spiritual buzz, then they have truly been cheated in that service. Only one thing genuinely matters – the truth. Jesus said this about someone who was truly born again in [John 8:31-32](#),



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³¹Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³²And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

True spiritual life is always related to the Word of God. Speaking of Christ, [John 1:14](#) says,

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

[John 14:6](#) says,

⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

In [John 14:17](#), the Holy Spirit is called “the Spirit of truth”,

¹⁷the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

[John 16:13](#), talking about the ministry of the Holy Spirit, says,

¹³However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

One of the most important statements that Jesus made on the truth is found in [John 17:17](#),

¹⁷Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

[Romans 1:18](#), speaking of God’s judgment, says

¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

[Romans 1:25](#), reiterating the man-centered mentality that dominates our culture, says this about lost people and about man-centered individuals,

²⁵who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

[2 Thessalonians 2:10-12](#), some of the most frightening verses in the New Testament, says,

¹⁰and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ¹¹And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, ¹²that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

[1 Timothy 3:15](#), speaking about one of the primary functions of the New Testament church, says,

¹⁵but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

[2 Timothy 4:3-4](#), speaking about the church in the last days, says,



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³**For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.**

The New Testament does not seem to have anywhere that any of the writers said that the ministry of the Word had to be uplifting, or that music should dominate a church service, or that the church needs to be creative and innovative with the technology and how church is actually done. However, there is a great deal about the “**truth**”. In [2 Corinthians 11:3](#), Paul had this concern when he said,

³**But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ**

In reality, the problem is that many of the experience oriented churches and ministries have no real understanding as to what the Holy Spirit is actually doing or what His ministry really is. They have actually reached a point where they are substituting experience for doctrine and experience for truth. The modern pragmatic mentality is this - “*Let us give people a really good experience in church.*” The trend in the modern church is frightening. Unfortunately, in the process the Holy Spirit is getting a lot of credit for things that most likely are not holy and that are not of the Spirit. Crediting the Holy Spirit with works that are not His is a very serious issue for it **demeans His true work**, and in some cases could border on a form of spiritual blasphemy. Some of the religious charlatans on television do exactly that – they actually blaspheme the Holy Spirit. They are performing their so-called bogus miracles under the power of the devil himself, and calling it a work of the Holy Spirit. **It is spiritual blasphemy**. Jesus said in [Matthew 12:27](#),

²⁷**And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.**

I.e., their sons were performing so-called miracles, but they were doing it by demonic power. Nothing has changed.

Now, the very reason to study [Romans 8](#) is simply to gain an understanding of the true character and ministry of the Holy Spirit. [Romans 8:1-27](#) has the most concentrated teaching on the work of the Holy Spirit anywhere in Scripture and there is **not one single word** on healing, miracles, speaking in tongues, having happy-clappy experiences, meeting felt-needs, or giving people meaningful experiences. Rather, what this chapter does in the first 27 verses is to clarify exactly what it is that the Holy Spirit is doing in each believer. In v2 that He frees the believer from the law of sin and death. I.e., the Holy Spirit has **freed the believer from the gripping tyranny of sin** that characterized their lives before salvation. What an absolutely incredible truth that the Holy Spirit has unchained each believer from the tyranny of sin and continues to free them from that awful tyranny. Sin exercised a certain dominion and power over their lives, but now that power has been completely broken and they can live and walk according to the Spirit.

In v4 Paul states the Holy Spirit has **changed the believer’s very nature** by giving them an entirely new nature. I.e., they have experienced an actual transformation. They were converted. This is not something that was just declared about them, but something that actually happened to them and within



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them. Sinners were regenerated, changed, converted, and made to be new creatures. Whereas each use to walk according to the flesh, all of that has changed and now believers “**walk according to the Spirit**”. This was not an effect that the believer caused, but an effect that was caused by the justifying and saving work of the Holy Spirit within them. Jesus told Nicodemus that in order to be saved that he must be “**born of the Spirit**”, or regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

In v5, the believer now sets their mind on the things of the Spirit rather than the things of the flesh. The Holy Spirit has given them life and therefore they now have the mind of the Spirit. Whereas previously they were dead to the things of God, now they are alive to the things of God. They are no longer living in bondage to the flesh, but are living according to the Spirit. Obviously, the flesh is still very much at work in their lives, but the power of the Holy Spirit within them is much greater. Obviously and practically there is still a very real conflict going on within every believer – and rightfully so. That struggle is present because the believer now has a new nature that is in direct conflict with their flesh. It is like a clean person in filthy clothes. The latter half of [Romans 7](#) speaks directly to this issue and describes in vivid detail that Paul had the same problem that every believer faces – having a redeemed Spirit that is housed in an unredeemed body. [Romans 7:21-23](#) expresses it this way,

²¹I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. ²²For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. ²³But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

This is the evident struggle – a Christian’s spirit has been redeemed, but their flesh is unchanged. It is this newness, this new nature, and this work of the Holy Spirit within them that creates the conflict and the battle within them that all believers face. So, we arrive at [Romans 8:7-11](#) which says,

⁷Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. ¹⁰And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

[Romans 8:7-11](#) are Paul’s commentary on [Romans 8:5-6](#). He is simply reiterating what he has just said, and once again, he does so with contrasts. It is his hermeneutical methodology and that cannot be overlooked. This is a contrast between the regenerate and the unregenerate, between the lost and the saved. He says (1) that “**the carnal mind is at enmity with God**”, (2) that it is “**not even subject the law of God**”, (3) that it cannot be subject to the law of God (“**nor indeed can be**”), and (4) that no one in the flesh (lost, unconverted, unredeemed) can “**please God**”. In contrast to that he says (1) that the believer has the Spirit of God dwelling in him, (2) that the Spirit working within the believer is life



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because of the righteousness of Christ, and (3) that the Holy Spirit gives life to the believer. One is dead to the things of God and the other is alive to the things of God.

So, the first thing that Paul states is that the carnal mind is “**enmity against God**”. It means that it is in opposition to God and Paul says that it cannot even be “**subject to the law of God**”. It has a rooted aversion to the spiritual law of God. “**Enmity**” is the Greek word “*echthra*”, and speaks of an enemy in an active sense, of one who is hostile to another. It means to be **antagonistic** towards someone. In a number of cases, it is actually translated as “**hostile**” (NASB), expressing a positive hatred which may be open or concealed, expressing deep-rooted hatred or irreconcilable hostility towards someone.

The mind is the most noble part of a man, and if the mind is at “**enmity with God**”, it only follows that everything else will be at “**enmity with God**”. The “**mind set on the flesh**” wants its own will, not God's will. It desires to be its own master and not to bow to Christ as Master. Here is the crux of disobedience. Unregenerate men do not have the power to submit their rebellious wills to a holy God. They need a spiritual “heart transplant”. So, it is not only the inclination that is missing, but also the power to do what is pleasing to God. Literally, the flesh is dead toward God and always will be.

People with a carnal mind live their lives according to their fleshly desires and cravings. Their flesh dominates them, it controls them, and it has an overriding influence over them. All of that creates a spiritual hostility to God and the things of His kingdom and one in which the individual will not submit themselves to God. In reality, they are spiritually dead and cannot submit themselves to Him. This is what is found in the doctrine of total depravity. Total depravity is much more than someone simply disobeying. Rather, it is a deep-seated sinful nature that is always opposed to God. There is a great difference between a man being in the flesh, and the flesh being in a man. Christians are not in the flesh, but the flesh is still in them. [Galatians 5:17](#) speaks of this when it says,

¹⁷For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

In reality, the natural man, the carnal man, and the carnal mind is entirely incapable on their own of choosing what is good. Scripture describes the carnal man and the lost man as being “**ungodly**”, of being an enemy of God, as “**without strength**”. [Romans 5:6 and 10](#) says,

⁶For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

¹⁰For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

[Ephesians 2:1-3](#) gives this description,

¹And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ²in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.



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At the end of v7, Paul says that the carnal mind “**is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be**”. The phrase “**nor indeed can be**” means not able. I.e., the carnal mind does not have power by virtue of some inherent ability or inner resource. The unregenerate man does not have the inherent resource of the Holy Spirit. They completely lack the inherent power or ability to submit to God. [Romans 8:9](#) says,

⁹But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.

What great words – “**but you are not in the flesh**”. A believer is not like the lost man.

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Believers should spend much time studying doctrine. The Bible consistently talks about men that “**depart**” from the faith, and it is important to understand that those Scriptures are not just talking about people who may stop coming to church. Certainly, it may include them, but a departure from the faith is not necessarily a departure from the church. We could take a church like Joel Osteen has in Houston, and certainly attendance is not their issue. On any given Sunday they average 43,500 people in attendance. A departure from the faith is referring to a departure from sound biblical doctrine. I.e., men will no longer be interested in sound biblical teaching, and so they depart from that position. [2 Timothy 4:3-4](#) puts it like this when it says,

³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

So, departing from the faith is a departure from sound biblical doctrine. The believer’s ability to stand for the truth is directly related to their being grounded in strong theology. Erroneous teachings always distort the core truths of the gospel message. In every generation the strongest pillars in the church are those believers who are the strongest in the truth. There are no exceptions to this. If believers are not strong in the truth, then they will be weak in the faith and will lack the deep convictions needed to stand for God and Christ. What someone believes ultimately determines how they live and how they serve. So these theological principles are what shape how a believer ultimately impacts the hour in which they live and in which God has placed them. They affect how they live their lives for the cause of Christ. Shallow theology always produces shallow convictions, and shallow convictions always produce spiritual mediocrity and indifference. Doctrinal compromise or doctrinal indifference will inevitably lead to superficial living.

In [Romans 8:7-11](#) the first thing that is seen is that “**the carnal mind is enmity against God**”. It means to be in opposition to God and Paul says that it cannot even be “**subject to the law of God**”. It is diametrically opposed to the spiritual law of God. The Greek word for “**enmity**” refers to someone who is an enemy in an active sense and of one who is actually hostile to another. It means to be **antagonistic** towards someone. In a number of cases, it is actually translated as “**hostile**” and expresses a positive hatred which may be open or concealed, expressing deep-rooted hatred or irreconcilable hostility towards someone.



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Now, as seen all through [Romans 8](#), Paul is contrasting the lost person with the saved person – and obviously this initial statement is a description of a lost person. For those who are saved, this really should be a great encouragement simply because a genuine believer knows that they are NOT in opposition to God, that they are not actively hostile and antagonistic to God, and that they do not have any kind of irreconcilable hatred toward God. Certainly every believer fails, and quite miserably on some occasions, but they simply are not actively and irreconcilably hostile to God. To the contrary, they know that they love God.

Beginning in [Romans 8:8-9](#), Paul says that **“those who are in the flesh cannot please God”**. I.e., the lost individual simply cannot please God. They believe that they can be a good person and do good things and therefore ultimately please God, but from God’s perspective all of their good amounts to nothing. [Romans 3](#) is very clear in this regard. There is nothing an unsaved person can do to please God - no good works, no religious observances, no sacrificial services, absolutely nothing. So, before salvation the lost person could not please God in any way. Whatever they did that they thought was good, in reality was not good because it was never performed for God’s glory or for His honor. It was performed in the flesh and for the wrong motives. It is what John MacArthur defines as *“dead good”*.

From a positive perspective, however, what these verses state is that what God desires of believers is that they live their lives in such a way that their life is pleasing to Him, and Paul expresses that in v9 when he says,

“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

The word **“but”** is a word of strong contrast. Once again, this is an ongoing contrast here – **“but YOU are NOT in the flesh”**. **“You”** are no longer in the grip of your evil nature. The passage could be paraphrased this way,

“But as for you, in contrast to the unsaved, you are not in the sphere of the evil nature, the flesh, but in the sphere of the Spirit.”

The little preposition **“in”** speaks of the sphere in which one lives. Just as a fish lives in water, so too a believer no longer lives in the flesh, but he lives in the sphere of the Spirit. Here the great mark of a true and genuine born-again Christian is that **“the Spirit of God dwells in him”**. If he is indwelt by the Spirit of God, he is **“not in the flesh”**, but instead he is an entirely different kind of being and is now **“in the Spirit”**. In fact, the word for **“not”** means absolutely not. The sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit now becomes the element or the sphere in which the believer lives.

To further reiterate this truth, the word **“if”** is the Greek word *“eiper”* and could be translated **“since”**, or **“as is the fact”**, or **“as is the case”**. That is, **“since”** the Holy Spirit of God dwells in the believer, it is an indication that they are not in the sphere of the evil nature, or the **“flesh”**, but have been truly born again. I.e., they are saved, and they are very able to please God with their life because **“the Spirit of God dwells in you”**. What was previously missing from their life is now fully present in their life. They are not **“in the flesh”** anymore. That is the real test.



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The true mark of a born-again believer and a genuine Christian is that they are indwelt by the Spirit of God. Scripture actually defines a believer as a **“new creation”** in [2 Corinthians 5:17](#). So, because of the work of salvation, the indwelling Holy Spirit gives a believer a totally different life. The contrast can be clarified by asking some questions. *“Does the individual really and sincerely love God and love Christ? Do they sincerely and genuinely love God’s Word? Are these things uppermost in their mind and heart? **Or** are they still in rebellion against God, always resisting what they know to be His perfect will for their life, and always finding ways, excuses, and reasons to not do what they know pleases God?”* If the latter questions are the case, then in reality the individual most likely has never been saved and is not indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Please understand that this discussion is not talking about works as a means of salvation, but it is clearly addressing the fact that without meaningful biblical fruit, salvation has not taken place in a person’s life.

This truth can be reiterated by simply identifying what the word **“dwell”** means in the phrase of v9 **“if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you”**. **“Dwells”** is the Greek word *“oikeo”* and means to live or dwell in a certain place as one’s home. I live at 246 Bairwood Road in Windsor, SC. That is my home and where I live. The word **“dwells”** is in the present tense and means **“is dwelling”** or **“is continually dwelling”**. This is important because it emphasizes that the Spirit is not an occasional visitor, but that He has actually taken up residence in the believer. Because the verb is in the present tense, it denotes a permanent fact. I.e., it is not that the Holy Spirit is here today and gone tomorrow. It is not that He saved someone many years ago, but since then they have not had any meaningful activity of His working in their life. It does not mean or even imply that in any way. To the contrary, it means that the Holy Spirit is permanently indwelling the believer and having a **continual** impact on their life. The word **“dwell”** represents a settled, permanent, penetrating influence within the believer’s life. I.e., it is not that the Holy Spirit is simply present in someone’s life – not at all. If that were the case, if He was only present in the believer’s life, then in reality He may never have an influence on the individual or how they think or how they live. However, that is NOT what this word means. To the contrary, it means that **His presence within the believer has a penetrating and impacting influence on them personally.** I.e., He impacts the believer, He persuades them, He effects them, He stimulates them, and His presence bears on their life. He is One who provokes them and causes things to happen within their life.

So, it is important to understand and appreciate that His indwelling presence within the believer’s life actually becomes the controlling factor over their life. He is that powerful – and intentionally so. He is constantly conforming every believer into the image of Christ, and if that image of Christ is not being formed in them, if they are no more like Christ today than they were ten years ago, then in all likelihood they have never been saved. Why say that? It is simply because the influence of the indwelling Holy Spirit within a believer is a **penetrating, impacting influence** on their life. He simply cannot dwell or be present in the believer’s life without making an impact on their life. That is a spiritual impossibility, and in a very subtle way is a denial of the doctrine of sanctification.



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What is known about the Roman Christians is that their faith was spoken about throughout the world. However, their impact was not determined by some simple profession of faith.. Their impact was revealed by their response to the Spirit of God who indwelt them. V10 says it this way,

¹⁰**And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness**

Everyone knows people that say that they believe in God or that they believe in Christ or that they believe the Bible, yet without anything in their life that would validate that they actually are indwelt by “**the Spirit of life**”. That is why these early Christians had more than just a simple profession. A mere profession of faith does not guarantee possession of faith. At some point there must be the **genuine biblical evidence** of the penetrating influence of the Holy Spirit within a believer’s life. The Spirit of God within the Roman believers was life and thus producing evident and obvious spiritual life within them.

It is amazing how clearly evident the actual life of God is within a person. I spent two days some time back with Dr. Sullivan’s son Bret, and for two days, almost every conversation that we had was about the things of God. We would be sitting on the couch talking about the Word of God, about doctrine. We would be riding in the truck talking about the sovereignty of God. We would be eating and he would ask me about the impact that the doctrine of the Incarnation had made on my life. The “**Spirit of life**” in Christ Jesus was manifesting itself in his life and through his life, and so it should be for anyone who is born again.

That is why Paul adds the phrase “**if indeed the Spirit of God dwells (lives) in you**”. He is clearly **emphasizing the work** of the Holy Spirit in the believer – not merely His location. It is critical to understand that part of this verse. This is the decisive and crucial test for salvation – **is the Spirit of God having a penetrating and impacting influence on the individual’s life**. Every other confession or declaration of Christ is of no avail **without** the clear and evident work of the Holy Spirit within the individual. Someone may be a member of a church, yet unless there is a demonstration of this vital union which comes from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, that individual is only His in name, but not in reality and not in actuality. If an individual does not progressively manifest the life of the indwelling Holy Spirit, then why should someone believe that that individual is of Christ? Notice how Paul specifically addresses this in the second half of [Romans 8:9](#). This is what He clearly states in the last sentence,

⁹**...Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.**

Look at that verse carefully. If a person does not have the evident, obvious, apparent, unmistakable work of the Holy Spirit within their life - i.e., **DOES NOT HAVE THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST** – notice what Paul says. He says, “**he is not His**”. He is not of Christ. He is not saved. It could not be any more clear than that – “**he is not His**”. Paul is clearly indicating that a person without the evident work of the Holy Spirit does not belong to Christ. If the Holy Spirit actually indwells a person, then He, the Holy Spirit, **WILL** by God’s design have a transforming effect and influence on their life. [1 John 4:13](#) says,



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¹³By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

The phrase “**he is not His**” is literally “**He is absolutely not His**”. The Greek tense is what is referred to as the “genitive of possession” which conveys the idea of ownership, and in this case in a negative sense. I.e., Paul's point is that the one who does not have the Spirit of Christ is not “owned” by Christ and thus is an unsaved person. Since only the Holy Spirit gives spiritual life, a person cannot be related to Christ apart from the saving and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Both spiritual elements **must** be present.

There is no such thing as a Christian who does not possess the Holy Spirit. Even to the Corinthians who were so sinful, Paul says to them in [1 Corinthians 6:19](#),

¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

The Holy Spirit lives in every believer. That is an absolutely crucial thing to understand. The Holy Spirit is not just out there somewhere. The believer does not have to chase the Holy Spirit. They do not have to go to some kind of event to find Him. They do not have to feel Him through some special emotional experience. The Holy Spirit lives in their very being. He has taken up His permanent residence in the believer's life, and He will stay there as God's seal of ownership and as God's sign of protection until the day when the believer enters into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He is a sanctifying Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the believer's guardian. The Holy Spirit is the believer's life. If He were not there, the life of God would not be in the believer or working in the believer. If God the Father decided to remove the Holy Spirit from a believer's life, that individual would stop following Christ immediately. Living the Christian life without the work and presence of the Holy Spirit is a spiritual impossibility.

The mark of the Spirit's presence within a believer is His life being reproduced in the believer's life. It only makes sense that it would be that way. He takes up residence within the believer at the new birth, and then He begins to exercise His prevailing and sanctifying influence over their life and He produces His life in them. [Jude 19](#), talking specifically about lost people, says this about them,

¹⁹These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.

As stated on several occasions, the [Romans 8](#) verses provide a contrast between lost people and saved people, and here in [Jude 19](#) is yet another contrast. Unbelievers simply do not have the Spirit. Rather, they are in the flesh and they mind the things of the flesh. They walk according to the flesh, and they are spiritually dead. In contrast, believers are in the Spirit, have the mind of the Spirit, and walk according to the Spirit. They are alive to God because the Holy Spirit lives in them.

As defined in previous studies, **a believer cannot have justification without sanctification**. I.e., a person cannot be saved initially, but not grow eventually. They cannot have a salvation that does not result in their sanctification or in their growing to be more like Christ. Unfortunately, the modern church has unwittingly communicated this false position to so many people because it is simply what they want to hear – that they can go to heaven and enjoy all of the eternal benefits of salvation without



HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:7-9

Part 4

the actual present and sustaining work of salvation taking place in their life. The modern church has effectively convinced people that they can be saved without ever growing in their Christian life. It is a position of biblical false teaching – justification without sanctification. It is the simple idea of just say a prayer, just make a decision, but without having any sustaining evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in the person's life. In reality, that is a position of spiritual heresy and will leave a person greatly lacking when they face the judgment and eternal evaluation of God on their life.

Without the evident and genuine work of the Holy Spirit manifesting itself in a person's life, there can be no assurance of salvation. Please appreciate that [Romans 8](#) is a commentary on eternal security. So, this is one of the ways how believers can personally know that they are in Christ – by the evident, penetrating work and influence of the Holy Spirit on and over their life. For those who are truly born again, this passage ought to thrill them immensely. These verses should fill the believer with the most incredible of encouragements because they know that the Holy Spirit is actually working in them, leading them, teaching them, encouraging them, and influencing them. It is a visibly evident work and others can tangibly see it. They have a hunger for the things of God, for the Word of God, a hunger for God's church and for living a life that is obedient to Christ. These verses ought to just thrill the believer! The Spirit is resident in their life and is actively at home in their life, dwelling in them, and living in them as His home. He is performing His life-changing work in their life and giving real and genuine victory over sin and producing His fruit in their life. [Romans 8:2](#) expresses it this way,

²For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

What an incredible difference the Holy Spirit makes in a believer because He actually lives within their life. The believer actually experiences the Holy Spirit's very life and His exceeding strength. This is not simply a kind of spiritual theory that may or may not happen – not at all. This IS the reality of the Christian life. This IS one of the spiritual cornerstones of both salvation and the corresponding sanctification that follows. This is the Christian life. When evangelist D. L. Moody was saved, he described his conversion experience and said: "*I was in a new world.*" That is an incredibly accurate assessment and observation. This can be stated in another very important way. Every Christian has the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them. When Christ takes possession of any individual as His own, He places the Holy Spirit within that person's life. Scripture calls it a "seal". [2 Corinthians 1:22](#) says,

²²who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

[Ephesians 1:13-14](#) says,

¹³In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

[Ephesians 4:30](#) reiterates the same and says,



HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:7-9

Part 4

³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption

The point in this is really very simple - without the presence of the Holy Spirit in a person's life, they can have no interest in Christ. People will not have an interest in the things of God or in His Word or in living for Christ through their own personal desires – not at all. **All of the believer's interest in Christ and the things of God are given to them in the new birth, and they are fully sustained by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in their life.**

The truth of this passage is so crystal clear. In a negative sense, the person who gives no evidence of the presence, power, and fruit of God's Spirit in their life has no legitimate claim to biblical salvation. Stated another way, the person who demonstrates and displays no meaningful and lasting desire for the things of God and has no inclination to avoid sin and has no passion to please God is not indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and thus does not belong to Christ.

In light of these sobering truths, Paul admonishes those who **claim** to be Christians with these words in **2 Corinthians 13:5**,

⁵Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified

How can the believer know “**that Jesus Christ is in you**”? It is through the indwelling Holy Spirit. He is actually called the “**Spirit of Christ**”.

The word “**test**” is a present imperative verb to see if someone is really in the faith. A person could not make a greater mistake than to not accurately examine their life to see whether or not they are really born again or not. This is the one truth that a person does not want to ever get wrong. The word “**examine**” is the Greek word “*dokimazo*”, and it is also a present imperative verb. I.e., if the person does not make a proper evaluation of their personal salvation, there is a great chance that on the day that they stand before God that they will be found to be disqualified. It means that they will fail the test and be rejected after God's examination of their profession. How frightening could that be! The meaning here could be stated as a formula:

No evidence of the Spirit of Christ in a person's life = Not being born again and not having the Spirit of Christ.

It means that a person is lost and is abiding under the wrath of God. They are headed to an eternity without Christ in a place of indescribable torment. May God in His incredible grace and mercy give each of us the understanding of whether we are truly in the faith. May He give us the grace to truly examine our lives to see whether or not we will be able to stand the test on that day.

⁹But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.