

You are NOT in the Flesh

Romans 8:9

September 20th, 2009



Jay Ablinger was the Dell computer technician who fielded a call from a lady who was in distress because her computer was not working. She had taken it out of the box and followed the directions as best she could, but could not get it to come on. So she dialed the number and Jay answered. In a calming, nice voice, he said, "I'm Jay, how can I help you?" She shared that her computer would not come on. Jay, following Dell protocol, immediately said, "Ma'am, would you check and make sure that the power cord is plugged into a power outlet?" She assured him that it was. So he said, "Ma'am, what happens when you push the power button on?" She said, "Nothing." He said, "Ma'am, would you try to do it again?" She did and he asked her what happened. She said, "Absolutely nothing. Jay, you don't understand. I have been pushing and pushing and pushing the power button on the foot pedal on and on and on, but it will not come on." He said, "Foot pedal?" She said, "Yes, you know that foot pedal that you sent with the computer. I plugged it in as the instructions said and I put it on the floor. I have been stomping one of those two buttons. I tried both of those buttons and absolutely nothing happens." When you confuse the computer mouse for a foot pedal, a computer will not work as designed!

As we read the passage, let's understand that many people struggle with living the Christian life. Perhaps, it is because from time to time, there is confusion on just exactly how God designed the life of a believer to be. In Romans 8, Paul has been painting an awesome picture of a believer in Christ who has moved out of Adam into Christ. He is not condemned to live a life of misery because the Spirit of God within him has set him free from the control of sin. For what the law could never do, God did by sending His Son. In a flesh like ours, He condemned sin in the flesh so the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Then, in verses 5-8, Paul contrasts two kinds of people; a person who walks according to his unredeemed flesh, and a person who walks according to the Spirit of God within him. The person who is unredeemed, living in the flesh, sets his mind on the things of the flesh. But the person who is in Christ, living in the Spirit, sets his mind on the things of the Spirit. There are two completely different consequences. The unredeemed person will die and be separated from God, and the redeemed person will live eternally with God forever. The unredeemed person will live in hostility toward God. He can never live a life that pleases God or carry out God's Law. The redeemed person will be at peace. He is at peace with God because he has been brought into a right relationship with Him. Sin does not separate him from God any longer. He now has the peace of God in his life, so he can get along with his family, friends, and any others because that peace of God passes all understanding.

Now, verse 9 is crucial. Paul tells us there is a contrast between the life of a redeemed person and that of an unredeemed person. Many people do not know if they are living the kind of life that Paul is talking about here. So let's examine these passages and see why. It is always possible that a person has a false faith instead of a real one. That is why the Bible says to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith. That does not cause doubt; it leads to certainty and assurance. If it is real, it will stand the test of scrutiny. Perhaps, we just haven't followed the instructions of the Bible

enough to fully understand how God has designed the Christian life to be lived.

Scripture

“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.”

In the Spirit

The first thing we notice in this verse is that Paul switches from third person pronouns to second person. He is no longer making a statement of fact about two completely different types of people who are alive on the earth at this very moment. He now begins to talk to the Roman congregation. He begins to use “you”, but it is an emphatic “you.” It grabs their attention when he tells them that they are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. Paul assumed that the congregation he was writing to, for the most part, was redeemed. They were not living a life of misery; they were living a life of victory. They were not setting their mind on the things of the flesh, or living according to the flesh. They were not going to face death. They were not living in hostility toward God. They were in Christ; they were in the Spirit. As a congregation, they were setting their mind on the things of the Spirit. They have experienced eternal life. A consequence of their salvation is that they have peace. Paul believed that in the Roman congregation, the righteous requirement of God’s law was actually being fulfilled in them. Paul knew he was writing to a redeemed people.

But before he goes on to another thought, he labors and hammers here to tell them that they are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. We have a phrase that we speak often here at HBC. It is, “Where you live determines who you are.” We didn’t make that up; we got that from Paul. Paul knew that you either live in one of two places. You either live in the flesh, or in the Spirit. Where you live determines who you are. I think Paul has been clear

that if you live in the flesh, you are unredeemed. You are a sinner because you are dead to God and alive to sin. It is your nature to sin. But if you live in the Spirit, it is your nature to obey God. You desire righteousness because you are dead to sin and alive to God. You don't live according to your unredeemed flesh; you live according to the Spirit of God who dwells within you. I believe this is talking about the same thing Paul talked about in Romans 5. He told us that we are either in Adam or we are in Christ. Paul's famous picture of a believer is a believer in Christ. If you are in Christ, it is the same as being in the Spirit. If you are in Adam, it is the same as being in the flesh. Now I am going to assume what Paul assumed about his congregation. I am speaking to Hardin Baptist Church, and I would put you up against the church at Rome any day. You are not in the flesh! Are you? If you know that you have turned from a life of sin and your faith is in Jesus Christ, and you have been made right with God on the basis of the blood of Jesus, and your sin has been forgiven, and you have been freed from the power of sin, you are not in the flesh! This is key to living a victorious Christian life. You do not live in two realms. You either live in the flesh, or you are in the Spirit.

If in Fact...

Now, we have to be careful as a church, and I have to be careful as a teacher. My favorite style of teaching is verse by verse, but what we are studying is directly dependent on the verses we have already studied in the book of Romans. What we will study afterward is dependent on this verse. The entire Bible fits together as a whole. Paul said that you are not of the flesh, but we know the flesh is still in us. I am not in the flesh, but the flesh is still in me. That is why a believer can still commit acts of sin. But Paul is teaching that you have a different principle now that governs your life as a believer. It is not your unredeemed flesh; it is the Spirit of God. That is why there is such a contrast between a believer and an unbeliever. If you notice in this verse, he says, "...if in fact the Spirit of God dwells within you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him." Paul uses Spirit three times, but they are different words: Spirit,

Spirit of God, and Spirit of Christ. All three refer to the third person of the Godhead; the Holy Spirit of God. Paul identifies the person of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God and of Christ, signifying the unity of the Godhead; Father, Son, and Spirit. This caused controversy in the early Church.

Now, the phrase Western Church refers, generally, to the Roman Catholic Church. As a young kid, I assumed there must be an Eastern Church if there was a Western Church. But I discovered that we do not have one here because we do not live in an area that has been dominated by the Roman Catholic Church. But if you go east of Rome and Israel, you have the Eastern Orthodox or Russian Orthodox Church, which is the Eastern Church. It saddens my heart that a group of believers will not agree on everything, and it sometimes leads to division. That is what happened in the Roman Catholic Church. There was a group that said the Holy Spirit of God does not proceed from the Father and the Son, but the Father only. They broke fellowship over whether the Spirit comes just from the Father, or the Father and the Son!

It kind of reminds me of that guy I heard of on a desert island. He was by himself for thirty years when he was finally rescued. When the rescue workers got there, they pulled ashore and there he was. They saw three buildings up on the hill. As they were taking him off the island, they noticed that he was in great shape and was not malnourished at all. They couldn't help but notice those three buildings and two of them looked like churches. They asked if there were others on the island with him and he told them no. They asked if there were others on the island when he got there. He said that he had not seen another human being in the thirty years he had been there. They said, "We are kind of confused. We see three buildings up there on a hill and one clearly looks like your house, but the other two look like churches." He said, "Yes, that's my house." They said, "What is the building on that side of your house?" He said, "That is the church I go to now." They said, "What is the other building?" He said, "That is the church I used to go to."

The Holy Spirit of God, who is given to every believer, caused division in the early Church. Paul said that if in fact the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of Christ, dwells in us; this means that Hardin Baptist sides with the Western Church because Jesus clearly taught that He would send the Holy Spirit. He also taught that the Holy Spirit comes from the Father because the Father and the Son are one. There are not three Gods. There is one God; Father, Son, and Spirit. They are three persons, but they are one Godhead. If He, third person of the Godhead, dwells in you, you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.

This word "if" in English is unfortunate. We see it as doubt and uncertainty. That is not how this is used. It is a first class conditional sentence in the Greek. This means 'if *this* is true, then *that* is true.' Now, what is true? If you have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in you, you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. If you are in the Spirit and not in the flesh, you have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in you. Paul said that if you do not have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in you, you are not His. Do you have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in you?

Make Yourself at Home

This word "dwell" is interesting. The Greeks used this word to mean 'take up residence, to move in permanently, or to make it your home.' Around here, we say "make yourself at home." We only say that if we really like them and are honored for them to be there. If you don't really want them there or don't really like them, you don't say it! But if you come to my house and I tell you to make yourself at home, I want you to live the way you would live at your house while you are in my home. Now, I am warning you, if I come to your house and you tell me to make myself at home, I will take you up on it. I will make myself at home. The first thing I will do is to kick my shoes off at the door. I might even take my socks off. I will un-tuck my shirt because I don't run around my house with my shirt tucked in with a belt on. I might slip my belt off. The first place I will head is to the fridge. I am looking for 7-Up! If you are going to tell me to make

myself at home, you had better have some 7-Up in the fridge! Then, I will look through every door in your kitchen until I find your pantry. If you don't believe that, just ask my wife. Sometimes I don't know where the things are that I am looking for. This morning, I looked through every drawer in the bathroom trying to find an extra razor blade to put in my razor. After I went through every drawer, my wife said that it was in the drawer I first looked in...sure enough, it was right there! When I find your pantry, I am looking for some Snickers, or Milky Ways. I have to have chocolate. A Ding Dong will suffice. Then I will head to the chair in front of the TV where the remote control is. With the remote in my hand, I will choose what we will watch, because you told me to make myself at home. We will have an awesome time! Eventually it will be bedtime, and I go to bed really late. Don't worry if you have to go to bed before I do, that will be ok. I'm a big boy; I can take care of myself. If you take care of my room, you will pull the covers back on my bed and give me that nice, fluffy, soft pillow. I will look through your PJ's, because I want to have a good night's sleep in your house. Now, I get up really early, and then I will be out of your way. Right now, you are saying, "Hold it Bro Ricky, you aren't coming over to our house!"

New Life through the Spirit

That is exactly what is going on in your life with the Holy Spirit of God. You want him to be a guest in your body and show up at key times. You say make yourself at home, but you expect a guest to leave. While you enjoy a guest for a few hours, you want to get back to doing whatever you were doing before they came. That is why some of us lip Victory in Jesus, but in our heart, we cannot really sing it. That's why many of us are struggling with Romans chapter 8. It is just not painting a picture of our life. The word the Bible uses here does not mean the Holy Spirit is a guest that you allow to come in and make Himself at home. It is a word meaning that at the point of salvation, the Holy Spirit shows up and takes ownership of your life. He moves in as a permanent resident in you. The first thing He does is to make Himself at home. He changes the name of the mailbox

from sinner to saint. He puts a big sign that says, "Under new management." The Bible says that you are not your own, but are bought with a price. So you are to glorify God with your body and spirit because your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. God paid for us with the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. When He bought us, He moved the old man out and put a new man in. The new man is governed, not by his unredeemed flesh, but by the Spirit of almighty God! The first thing God does just to let you know that He is in charge is to move in and rearrange the furniture of your life. When you start living this Christian life, you trip over a lot of things that you didn't use to trip over because everything is no longer where it used to be. You go to the fridge and discover He cleaned out the fridge. You go to the magazine rack and understand that He is bringing new magazines into your life. You go into the kitchen and He will not let you eat on the same stuff you used to eat on. He takes you into the kitchen of God's Word and opens up a diet to you that has been nourished by the Bread and the Water of Life, Jesus Christ Himself! He moves into the bedroom and you have intimacy with God, the Father. You cry out because the Holy Spirit of God cries out, Abba Father! He is not a God who is a million miles away in another galaxy. He is your Daddy! He has put His Spirit within you.

Have you ever driven down the road and seen a place you have always seen and wonder who bought the place? Why do you know there is a new owner, or the property has changed possession? It is because you see a dramatic change in the upkeep of the property. Do you get this? There should be such a contrast between our life in the flesh and our life in the Spirit that the world around us says, "I wonder who bought that place." Someone should be answering, "The Holy Spirit of God! Wow, I wonder what He could do if I sold myself to Him? What could He do if He bought me?" Do you see why God put you in the Spirit and not in the flesh? It is so that God could ultimately use you to let others see what He can do with them when He buys them.

Are you in the flesh or are you in the Spirit? Over the next few lessons, we will learn how to walk in the Spirit. We will understand that this is a 24/7 life; 365 and ¼ days a year. We don't take a day off. That is why we don't have to add a day every four years in the Christian life. We are not flesh-men, we are Spirit-men. Are you experiencing the life change of God's grace? I am not just talking about your actions toward people; I am talking about your reactions toward people. The Christian life cannot be lived by you, but it can be lived by the Spirit through you. If you have the Spirit of God within you, you can still sin, but you cannot continue in the same old sins, day after day, month after month, and year after year. The Spirit of God will not let you. That's why God can say be holy because I am holy. That's why the Bible says that we do not fulfill the law, but the law is fulfilled in us by the Holy Spirit.