

LESSON ELEVEN
THE BONDAGE OF THE LAW IN OUR FLESH (3)

Scripture Reading:

2. The Indwelling Christ
vv. 7-13

- 8:7 Because the mind set on the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, for neither can it be.
- 8:8 And those who are in the flesh cannot please God.
- 8:9 But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him.
- 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.
- 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One 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 indwells you.
- 8:12 So then, brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh to live according to the flesh;
- 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live.

OUTLINE:

III. The Indwelling of Christ the Spirit—Rom. 8:7-13

A. The Flesh—8:7

B. The Indwelling of Christ the Spirit—8:9-10

1. The Indwelling of the Spirit of God—8:9

2. The Indwelling of the Spirit of Christ—8:9

3. The Indwelling of Christ—8:10

a. The Indwelling Sin - Bringing Death to the Body

b. The Indwelling Christ - Bringing Life to Our Spirit

C. The Imparting of Life—8:6, 10, 11

D. Our Cooperation—8:12

1. By Not Living according to Flesh—8:13

2. By Putting to Death the Practices of the Body—8:13, Gal. 5:24

Questions:

Section 1:

1. Why is it important to know that Christ is the indwelling Spirit today?
2. Supply three verses to show that the indwelling Spirit supplies Life to our spirit, soul and body.
3. Is our flesh going to become better after being saved? Why/why not? What is the point of improving the flesh?

Section 2:

1. How do we let the Spirit of God make home in our being?
2. Please relate the relationship between the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ and Christ.
3. Discuss how we can practically be in Christ so that Christ can be in us?

Section 3:

1. Why is it wrong to say "Since God has condemned sin, sin cannot function anymore. Our body is no longer dead—it is now alive"? What's wrong with the teaching of eradication? You can share your experience.
2. What are some items of Christ that we can only enjoy and experience while we are in our spirit?
3. As a Christian, why is it so important to stay in our spirit? Use one illustration to show the need to stay in our spirit.

Section 4:

1. Use three verses to show that Christ can impart Life into man's spirit, soul and body?
2. What are the ways you can suppress your spirit? And what is the way to restore your spirit?
3. What is the proper understanding of "crucify the flesh"? How do Christians actually "improve" ourselves toward God?

[Section 1]

III. THE INDWELLING OF CHRIST THE SPIRIT

Although in Romans 8:1-6 we clearly see the freedom of the law of the Spirit of life, it is difficult to see the central point of the next seven verses. However, if we enter deep into the thought of this portion, we will see that in it Paul is trying to tell us that something other than sin has its lodging within us. In 7:20 Paul said, "But if what I do not will, this I do, it is no longer I that do it but sin that dwells in me." Hence, Romans 7 exposes the indwelling sin. As we have seen, Romans 8 is a sharp contrast to Romans 7. Romans 7 has bondage; Romans 8 has freedom. Romans 7 has the law; Romans 8 has the Spirit. Romans 7 has our flesh; Romans 8 has our spirit. Moreover, Romans 7 has the indwelling sin. According to Romans 8 what indwells us? It is Christ, the indwelling Christ. In Romans 7 we have the indwelling sin as the main factor of all wretchedness. In Romans 8 we have the indwelling Christ as the factor of all blessedness.

If Christ were not the Spirit, He could never indwell us. He must be the Spirit in order to indwell us. In verses 9 and 10 we find three synonymous terms used interchangeably: "the Spirit of God," "the Spirit of Christ," and "Christ." Furthermore, verse 11 refers to the indwelling Spirit. These synonyms indicate and prove that Christ is the indwelling Spirit. Undoubtedly "the Spirit of God" in verse 9 is "the Spirit of life" in verse 2. After Paul mentions "the Spirit of God," he speaks about the "Spirit of Christ" and "Christ" Himself. Then in verse 11 he refers to the indwelling Spirit. This means that the "Spirit of God" is the "Spirit of Christ" and the "Spirit of Christ" is "Christ" Himself. Hence, Christ in us is the indwelling Spirit. He is "the Spirit of life," He is "the Spirit of God," and He is also "the Spirit of Christ" indwelling us that He may impart Himself as life to us. Christ not only imparts life to our spirit (v. 10), but also to our minds (v. 6) and to our mortal bodies (v. 11). Therefore, Christ is now life in the Holy Spirit (v. 2), life in our spirit (v. 10), life in our mind (v. 6), and life in our mortal body (v. 11). Christ is life with fourfold riches.

Christ is life to us with fourfold, intensified riches. He is not only life in the Divine Spirit and in our human spirit; He is even life in our minds. Furthermore, Christ can be life to our mortal bodies. In other words, He is now the life in God as well as the life in God's people. This is the main point of 8:7-13. The central point is that Christ as

the indwelling Spirit is life to us with fourfold riches. He is so rich. He sustains our spirit, supplies our minds, and even enlivens our mortal bodies. This life, which is Christ Himself, is the life that we enjoy today. May the Lord fully unveil this to us, not merely in a doctrinal way, but in the way of experience. We all must see that our Christ is the indwelling Spirit as life with fourfold riches.

A. The Flesh

Romans 8:7 says, "Because the mind set on the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be." This verse says emphatically that our flesh is a hopeless case. If our mind is set on our flesh, it also becomes hopeless. Anything that is one with the flesh is hopeless. Do not think that you can sanctify your flesh. This is impossible. Flesh is flesh, and flesh is absolutely hopeless. Never place any hope in your flesh. It can never be improved. God has made the definite decision that the flesh must be terminated because it is utterly corrupt. God judged Noah's generation with the flood because that generation had become flesh (Gen. 6:3). When that generation became flesh, God considered it hopeless. God found it impossible to rescue it, recover it, or improve it. God seemed to say, "Let that generation go. I must place it completely under My judgment." The judgment of the flood was a judgment upon the flesh. Only when man had become flesh did God exercise judgment over man as the flesh. Therefore, never say that your flesh can be improved. Never think that your flesh today is better than before you were saved. Whether a person is saved or not, the flesh remains flesh. The flesh is hopeless, and everything related to it also is hopeless.

Paul said that "the mind set on the flesh is enmity against God." The flesh is enmity against God, and the mind set upon it is also enmity against God. The mind set on the flesh is not subject to the law of God. It is impossible for such a mind to be subject to God's law, even if it would want to be. Thus, the verdict on the flesh is final. The flesh is over, and everything related to the flesh is over.

Paul continues this thought in verse 8 which says, "And those who are in the flesh cannot please God." As long as we are in the flesh, we cannot please God. Never say that your flesh is good. In verses 7 and 8 we see four points: that the flesh is enmity against God, that it is not subject to the law of God, that it cannot be subject to the law of God, and that the flesh cannot please God. This is the condition of the flesh.

[Section 2]

B. The Indwelling of Christ the Spirit

“But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone has not the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him” (v. 9). Many verses in the epistles begin with the wonderful word “but.” Hallelujah for “but”! In our history we need many “buts” such as this. We should be able to say, “Oh, I was down this morning, ‘but.’ I am so weak in myself, ‘but.’ I am absolutely hopeless, ‘but.’” Paul says, “But you are not in the flesh....” Never say that you have a good flesh and that you are in your good flesh. We should not remain in our flesh, for our flesh has been condemned. If a house has been condemned by the government, it is illegal for you to stay there. Likewise, the flesh has been thoroughly condemned by God, and we should not remain there, arguing that our flesh has improved. We should not be in the flesh, but in the spirit. This spirit denotes the human spirit mingled with the Divine Spirit.

1. The Indwelling of the Spirit of God

There is a condition for us to be in the spirit. The condition is that the Spirit of God dwell in us (v. 9). The word “dwells” really means “makes home.” We are in the spirit if the Spirit of God dwells, makes His home, in us. Although you are saved, perhaps the Spirit of God does not yet make His home in you. This explains why you are still not in the spirit. Although the Spirit of God is in you, He has been unable to make His home in you. He does not dwell in you. I may be invited to your home, but I am unable to make my home in your home. I am there as a guest, unable to settle myself there. Likewise, the Spirit of God is in us, yet He may be unable to dwell in us. He is the guest, not the dweller. If the Spirit of God can make His home in us, settling Himself in us with adequate room, then we will be in spirit and not in the flesh. However, if the Spirit of God does not have this room in which to lodge, we will remain in the flesh, not in the spirit.

2. The Indwelling of the Spirit of Christ

Verse 9 says, “But if anyone has not the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him.” Immediately “the Spirit of God” is changed to “the Spirit of Christ.” No one can deny that this indicates that “the Spirit of God” is “the Spirit of Christ” and that “the Spirit of Christ” is “the Spirit of God.” Paul says, “if any one has not the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him.” If you have realized that the Spirit of God does not yet make His home in you, do not be discouraged. Do not say, “Since the Spirit of God doesn’t have a home in me, I give up.” Although the Spirit of God does not dwell in you, you do have the Spirit of God which is the Spirit of Christ. As long as you have the Spirit of Christ, you are of Christ. Are you not of Christ? We all must declare, “Hallelujah, I am of Christ!” We have the Spirit of Christ in us and we are of Christ. However, it is a conditional matter whether or not the Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of Christ, dwells in us. The Spirit of Christ has to make His home in us, has to take possession of our inner being, that we may be in the spirit

3. The Indwelling of Christ

Verse 10 says, “And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is life because of righteousness.” Here it says that Christ is in us. In verse 9 it is “the Spirit of God” and then “the Spirit of Christ.” Now in verse 10 it is “Christ” Himself. This surely proves that “Christ” is “the Spirit of God” and “the Spirit of Christ.” We all must admit this. Christ as the Spirit is in us. This is a tremendous matter. Where was Christ in Romans 3? He was on the cross, shedding His blood for redemption. Where was Christ in chapter four? He was in resurrection. But in chapter eight Christ is in us. In chapter six we are in Christ, but in chapter eight Christ is in us. To be in Christ is one aspect; to have Christ in us is another. First, we abide in Christ, then Christ abides in us (John 15:4). Our abiding in Him brings His abiding in us. Being in Christ is the condition for Christ to be in us. Praise the Lord that Christ is in us! Christ has wrought Himself into us; He has been processed into us. This Christ has to dwell and make His home in us.

[Section 3]

a. The Indwelling Sin Bringing Death to the Body

Though Christ is in us, our body still remains dead because of sin. After reading the previous message in which we have pointed out that God has condemned sin in the flesh, some may say, “Since God has condemned sin, sin cannot function anymore. Our body is no longer dead—it is now alive.” This is not the right understanding of Paul’s word. Although God has condemned sin in the flesh, sin continues to dwell in our body, and thus our body is still dead. There is much argument about this point. Some say that since God has condemned sin on the cross, sin has been nullified and believers cannot sin. Some even say that after we are saved sin is eradicated or uprooted. The school of eradication teaches that when we were saved the root of sin within us was extracted. All those who follow this school believe that sin has been eradicated from the being of a saved person.

About forty years ago in Shanghai there was a preacher who taught strongly this concept of eradication. He told people that they cannot sin after they are saved. One day, this preacher and several young men who sat under his teaching went to the city park in Shanghai. That park required the purchase of a ticket in order to be admitted. This man bought three or four tickets to be used by a total of five persons. How did he do this? Firstly, some of them entered the park with the tickets. Then one of them came out with the tickets and gave a ticket to one of the others. This continued until all five men had entered the park. In this sinful way that preacher brought his four young disciples through the gate of the park. As a result of this, one of the young men began to doubt the teaching of eradication. He said within himself, “What are you doing? You say that sin has been eradicated from you. What is this?” Eventually the young man went to the preacher and said, “Was that not a sin?” The preacher replied, “No, that was not a sin. That was just a little weakness.” Regardless of the terms we use, sin is sin. Although you may call it by another name, it remains sin nonetheless. Never accept a teaching which says that we have become so spiritual and holy that it is impossible for us to sin. If we accept such a doctrine, we will be deceived, and the result will be misery.

The Lord Jesus did accomplish everything on the cross, but the effect of what He did can only be realized by us when we are in the Spirit. In fact, whatever Christ did on the cross includes us. We

do have a share, a portion, in all that Christ accomplished on the cross. This is a glorious fact. However, we still need to experience it. Although the sin in our body has been fully dealt with by the cross of Christ, how can we experience this fact? The only way is to be in the Spirit. The Spirit of Christ is all-inclusive. Whatever Christ is, did, obtained, and attained is in the all-inclusive Spirit. Thus, if we are going to experience all that we have in Christ, we need to be experimentally and experientially in the Spirit. It is the all-inclusive Spirit that transmits into us all that we have in Christ.

We cannot afford to stay away from the Spirit. Day by day, hour after hour, and even moment by moment, we need to be in the Spirit. Do not say, “Last night I had a wonderful time with the Lord. Now I am holier than the angels and all my problems are over.” Although you might have had such an experience for a brief moment last night, if you do not stay in the all-inclusive Spirit you may sink as low as hell. Do not say that since you have received a certain vision or revelation or had a particular spiritual experience that you are holy and have no problems. If you say this you may later find yourself in wretchedness.

A good type of the Spirit is the air. We need to breathe the air constantly. We can never say, “In the morning I breathed deeply, taking in a lot of fresh air. Now I am filled with the air and don’t need to breathe any longer.” You should never stop breathing and you should never stay away from the air. Never think that since you have been filled once you do not need to breathe any more. If you stop breathing, you will be dead after five minutes. The experience of the Spirit of life is like breathing. We need to breathe every moment. We must remain in the life-giving Spirit, for once we are separated from Him we are dead. Do not say that you are qualified and experienced. You need to be always fresh and new. I do not care how long I have been saved or how long I have been experiencing the Lord’s riches. I only care for one thing—that I am presently in the Spirit. I must be freshly and instantly in the Spirit. The life-giving Spirit is like the breath. We must breathe Him unceasingly.

b. The Indwelling Christ Bringing Life to Our Spirit

Although Christ is in us, our body is still dead because of sin. The indwelling sin has brought death to our body. However, we should not be troubled by our dead body since our regenerated spirit is life because of righteousness. The indwelling Christ brings life to our spirit through righteousness. This righteousness is the righteousness of God, which is Christ. Christ is firstly righteousness to us and then, because of this, He is life also to us. When the prodigal son returned home to his father, he was not qualified to sit down with him and eat the fatted calf. He was not yet clothed with the proper garment, the best robe, which typifies Christ, the righteousness of God, as the covering that qualifies us to sit with the Father and to enjoy Christ as life. First we must have Christ as our righteousness. Then under this righteousness, under this righteous “robe,” we are qualified to enjoy Christ as our life. As long as Christ is in our spirit, our spirit is life because of Christ as our righteousness. Now not only is the Spirit of God life; even our regenerated spirit is life. The Spirit who is Christ Himself is now life in our spirit. Therefore, our spirit becomes life. The indwelling Christ has brought life to our spirit.

[Section 4]

C. The Imparting of Life

Verse 11 says, “But if the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from among the dead dwells in you, He Who raised Christ Jesus from among the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit Who indwells you.” The Spirit in this verse is the Spirit of resurrection. We have seen that our spirit is life (v. 10) and that our mind also is life (v. 6). Now we come to the last item of our being, our mortal body. Our body is dying. However, life is given even to our dying mortal body. Our body can participate in this life, be sustained with this life, and be supplied with this life through His Spirit who indwells us. Undoubtedly, the indwelling Spirit is the resurrected Christ (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17). Christ as the indwelling Spirit constantly imparts life to every aspect of our being.

An excellent illustration of this is electricity. Although electricity has been installed into a building, its flow can be frustrated. Christ, the life-giving Spirit, has been installed into our being as the heavenly electricity. However, only a small part of our being gives Him a free course; most of our being is not open to Him, but rather frustrates Him. For example, your emotions may be a frustration to Christ. Therefore, Christ has difficulty imparting Himself as life into your

emotions. You need to pray, “Lord, deal with my emotions. Break through my emotions that You may impart Yourself as life into them.” We need this kind of experience. Do not take this as a doctrine or teaching. This must be put into practice. If you practice this, you will find that Christ as life is now in your spirit, waiting for an opportunity to spread Himself into every area and avenue of your being. He is waiting to penetrate the hidden parts of your being. If you open yourself to Him, He will even impart Himself as life into your mortal body, making you a person who is filled with all the riches of His life. He will become in you a fourfold life, to make your spirit, mind, and body living.

D. Our Cooperation

Verse 12 says, “So then, brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh to live according to flesh.” This verse also proves that after we are saved the possibility still remains of living according to flesh. If this were impossible why would Paul remind us that we are not debtors to the flesh? We need to say, “Hallelujah! I am not a debtor to the flesh. I don’t owe it anything. I am not obliged to it. I am discharged from it and freed from it. I have been fully liberated from this hopeless thing called the flesh. I am not a debtor to the flesh to live according to it any longer.”

1. By Not Living according to Flesh

Paul continues, “For if you live according to flesh, you are about to die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live” (8:13). The “you” here certainly denotes saved persons. Hence, this verse is further proof that a saved person may live according to flesh. If we live according to flesh, we are about to die. Of course, this kind of dying is not physical; it is spiritual. If you live according to flesh, you are about to die in your spirit. However, if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body—that is, to mortify or crucify them—you will live. This means that you will live in spirit. This verse corresponds to verse 6 which says that the mind set on the flesh is death and that the mind set on the spirit is life. To live according to flesh primarily means to set our mind upon the flesh, and, likewise, to set our mind upon the flesh mainly means to live according to flesh. In order to put to death the practices of the body we need to set our mind on the spirit and walk according to spirit.

Take the example of a sister going shopping. In the store she sees a certain item which sells for \$12.99. The sister reasons with herself, “I make twelve hundred dollars a month. To spend \$12.99 for

clothes means nothing. The Lord is not poor. He is rich. Last week I gave two hundred and fifty dollars for the church building. What is wrong with spending \$12.99? Certainly the Lord is gracious.” The more she reasons, the more she dies. While she is thinking this way, her spirit is suppressed. She may try to comfort herself by saying, “I shouldn’t be so religious. There’s nothing wrong with what I’m doing.” However, the more she tries to sustain her spirit, the lower it descends. When she comes to the meeting all she can do is keep the form and strive to maintain the image of being a spiritual sister. Although she shouts, “Hallelujah,” it is lifeless and empty, a sign that she is dead in her spirit. Even though she suffers death in her spirit, she does not repent immediately. The following week she considers whether the article of clothing is still available. Finally, she purchases it and brings it home....As she comes to a meeting now she cannot even produce a formal hallelujah....One of the elders says to another, “What happened to that sister? Two months ago she was so living. What is the matter now? Does she have a problem with her marriage?” It does not take a major problem such as a difficulty in marriage to put her into a box. The small matter of purchasing an article of clothing for \$12.99 killed her spirit. She remains in that condition until one day, by the Lord’s mercy, she repents.

You need to examine your own experience. If when you think about a certain matter you have no rest in your spirit, stop your thinking. Call back your mind from the thing which gives your spirit unrest. Whenever you try to reason and you feel empty in your spirit, stop and turn your mind back to the spirit. You need to say, “O Lord Jesus, rescue me. Lord, deliver my mind from that consideration which gives me death.” If you do this, immediately you will have rest, comfort, satisfaction, and even strengthening in your spirit. As long as you have rest, comfort, and satisfaction within, it is an indication that your mind is set in the right direction. If you have no rest, comfort, or satisfaction, but rather feel dark, empty, and restless, it is an indication that your direction is toward death. In such a case you need to turn your mind back to the spirit.

In Romans 8 we find no teachings. We are simply told to walk according to the spirit. How can we walk according to spirit? By taking care of our mind, always setting it in the right direction. The mind should not be turned outward, but inward, not on shopping outwardly, but on the spirit inwardly. If you set your mind on the spirit, you will walk according to the spirit. In this way we enjoy Christ

and we participate fully in the all-inclusive Spirit. Automatically and unconsciously we have the fulfillment of the righteous requirements of God’s law (v. 4). Day by day we have the enjoyment of Christ as our fourfold life. All we need to do is to take care of our mind. Where is your mind? In what direction is your mind? We need to say, “Lord, have mercy on me and grant me Your grace that I will always have my mind turned toward You and set upon my spirit.”

2. By Putting to Death the Practices of the Body

When we have our mind set upon our spirit, our flesh will be put to death. By setting our mind on our spirit we put to death all the practices of the body. This is to “crucify the flesh” (Gal. 5:24). When we desire to go shopping, our feet may try to go, but our spirit says, “Stay on the cross.” This is mortifying, putting to death, or crucifying the deeds of our body. As a result, we will experience the death of Christ. The genuine experience of the co-crucifixion with Christ is to be had in the putting to death of the practices of the body by the Spirit. This does not happen once for all; it is a constant daily exercise. Every practice of the body must be put to death by turning our mind to the spirit and setting it on the spirit. This is the way to “walk according to spirit” (v. 4).

The word “walk” includes our whole living—what we say, what we do, and where we go. When we set our mind on our spirit continually, our entire walk will be according to spirit. We may call this the holy life, the victorious life, or the glorious life. Whatever we may call it, it is the expression of the indwelling Christ as our fourfold life. This is the experience we need to have in the church life.