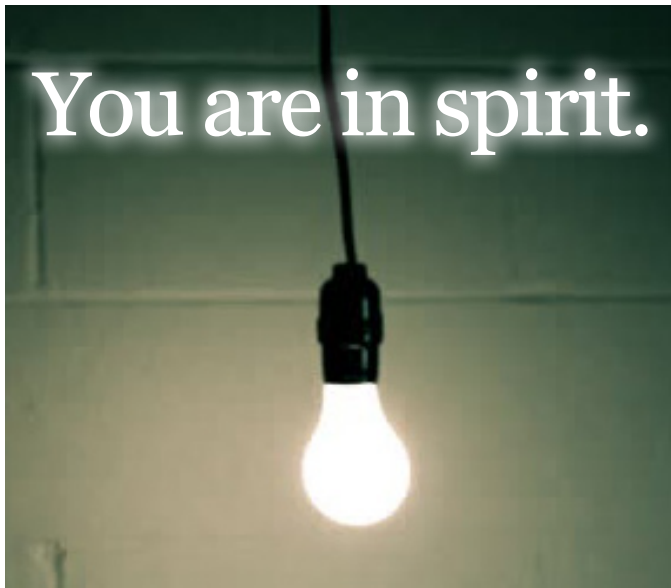


ROMANS Part 64

Chapter 8:9-10



Yet you are not in flesh, but in spirit, if so be that God's spirit is making its home in you. Now if anyone has not Christ's spirit, this one is not His. 10 Now if Christ is in you, the body, indeed, is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is life because of righteousness.

What an arrangement. Imagine being handed a dollar bill, then being treated as though you were Donald Trump. Imagine catching a football in your back yard, then being handed the Vince Lombardi trophy and a check for \$97,000. In the spiritual realm, this is the same as God's spirit simply making its home in you—in whatever measure—then being credited with the extravagant characterization, "You are not in flesh, but in spirit."

Other than this, you may be a complete loser.

You are God's because the spirit of God has set up shop inside of you. It doesn't take much spirit for this to be so. For Christ to claim possession of you in this eon, a dollop of spirit the size of a dime will do. Sometimes the amount seems so small that it's barely enough to keep our heads above the rising waters of life. I wish we had another verse to back this up. Oh, wait, we do—

Are you not aware that you are a temple of God and the spirit of God is making its home in you?"

—1 Corinthians 3:16.

KEEPING THE LIGHT ON

Remember the radio advertisement for Motel 6, when the voice of Tom Bodett came on and said, "We'll leave the light on for 'ya'"? Tom may still be providing for the world this apt analogy of God's spirit in us. God's spirit is like a light shining inside of you that's always left on. It's on, even when you're off. It's on when you're sleeping, eating, or doing any number of unmentionable things. This source of life may be little more than a night light, but it's enough for Paul to say of you, "You are not in flesh, but in spirit."

This is an extremely generous phrase.

Keep in mind that the above sentence (1 Corinthians 3:16) was written to people who Paul called "minors in Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:1). The Corinthians had a long litany of flaws, including jealousy, strife (1 Corinthians 3:3), and screwing step-mothers (1 Corinthians 5:1). In 3:1, Paul actually calls the Corinthians "fleshly," and in verse three of the same chapter he notes that they are, "walking in accord with humanity." It is apparently possible, then, for someone to be categorized as fleshly yet still be able to assume the respectable nomenclature: "Not in flesh, but in spirit." It is all because of that small yet persistent light inside of us, left on for us by God.

Thanks to the Corinthians, we know that someone



said to be in spirit can still do fleshly things. This ought to relieve any who think that their occasional (or continual) fleshly flare-ups threaten their membership in the body of Christ. No. Nothing can do that. Is God's spirit making its home in you? Then you are not in flesh, but in spirit. God gives you a monstrous amount of credit for a flicker so feeble that a Motel 6 sign may out-illumine it. Good enough. Take your trophy, cash your check, and thank God for such reckless generosity.

“NOT HIS”

“Now if anyone has not Christ's spirit, this one is not His” (Romans 8:9).

Here's a politically incorrect statement that I have been criticized for making over the years, and that I am happy to repeat in this edition of the ZWTF: “Fred is not Christ's.” (If your name is Fred, I apologize; I use other names too, depending on the name of the person who is not Christ's, for instance, “Joe is not Christ's.”) Some people are simply not, at this moment, Christ's. They don't belong to Him. God is still sovereign over these people and they will eventually be included in the “all in all” at the conclusion of the eons, but for now God has not only not left the light on for 'em, but He's

given 'em no light at all. It's nothing against Fred or Joe or any number of billions of differently-named people, it's just the facts. An unbeliever is an unbeliever no matter how he or she got that way. We know that God actively withholds faith from people. Is a fox not a fox because *God* has made it a fox? No, it's still a fox. We don't start calling it a kangaroo, do we, simply because God made it? It's the same with unbelievers. Why would it be such a crime, then, to call unbelievers “unbelievers?”

“That's not fair,” I'm told. “God hasn't given them faith.” I know that. So what? Does that mean that they are now something other than unbelievers simply because *God* is responsible for their lives? Are they now believers simply because the poor things don't have free wills? Are they now kangaroos? I don't get it. If either Fred or Joe think that they are anything but unbelievers, they may not realize their need of the evangel. (I have yet to meet a kangaroo that realizes its need of the evangel.) How does the sovereignty of God preclude anything from being what it is? Merely entertaining such an irrational thought is, for me, rash-inducing.

SWING LOW

We holders of the doctrine of the salvation of all sometimes like to “hang our hammocks at the consummation.” This is my pet-phrase for resting in the ultimate outcome of the eonian times and forgetting that, at present, we battle a crafty adversary seeking to destroy people and hinder the work. Satan today wages war against the forces of belief. How dare we fail to distinguish, then, between belief and the opposite thing? Paul continuously distinguishes these competing forces of belief and unbelief. Do we know something that Paul doesn't? Paul kept himself apprised of who were Christ's and who were not, recommending the same course to us. How else could we know who not to be unequally yoked with (2 Corinthians 6:14), or who to bring the evangel to (Romans 10:13-15)?

Satan hates our gospel and wants it stopped. You play into Satan's hand when you're toting around a giant hammock and looking to relax under the shade of the tree of life. I am of the disposition—having watched a televised newscast lately—that the consummation of the eons has yet to arrive. That irritating little apostle of ours—the man from whom we hear the startling truth that there are still unbelievers in the world—asks another irritating question in 1 Corinthians 6:14. “What communion has light and darkness?” Some would bellow, “We'll leave the light on for 'ya, and the darkness, too!” It's a bad mistake to be so

“nice” and so “tolerant” and so “understanding” that you can’t call darkness what it is. It’s even worse when you try to mix it with the light. Paul makes mega-fusses between light and darkness, therefore so must we. I wouldn’t wander into a women’s restroom today simply because, in the future resurrected state, there will be “neither male nor female” (Galatians 3:28). I am thinking that any such “Scriptural” excuse today would fail to impress the victims of my mistimed incursion.



IF CHRIST IS IN YOU ... YOU’RE SCREWED

“Now if Christ is in you, the body, indeed, is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is life because of righteousness” (Romans 8:10).

This is, to me, one of the most startling and fun passages in the book of Romans. When Paul starts a sentence with, “Now if Christ is in you ...” we expect it to end with a bang. Here are a few examples of what I would expect to see:

- ▶ “Now if Christ is in you, you will be able to leap over tall buildings in your dress shoes.”
- ▶ “Now if Christ is in you, you will suddenly crave broccoli instead of chocolate.”
- ▶ “Now if Christ is in you, every day will be a Friday, just like Joel Osteen says it should be.”

But no. Paul is too much of a realist for any Osteen-inspired fairy tale. Paul says, “Now if Christ is in you, the body, indeed, is dead because of sin.” What a buzzkill. Nothing in your body changes on the day Christ enters you. If you had a club foot before coming to a realization of Him, you’ll still have it afterward. Those with moles in awkward places should not hope for the moles to relocate. Unsaved procrastinators will still put things off in the wake of saving faith. This verse does away with the lie that Jesus Christ saves saints rather than sinners.

I’m not saying that the life of a spirit-filled person will not improve in light of the continually-burning light

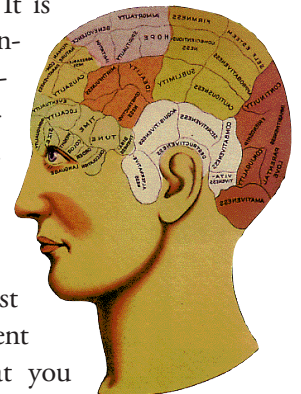
of God’s spirit. It is that ounce of spirit in us that has the “chance” of reforming derelict behavior. But it’s the spirit doing this, not some reservoir of specialness within the person. It’s the spirit that bears the fruit and not—for example—Fred. (“And the fruits of Fred are ...” No. *Yuck*. We don’t read this; we don’t *want* to read it.) This is consistent with the tenor of Romans, especially chapter 8. Romans is about the accomplishment of Christ and the hopelessness of humanity. The fact that the body is still dead because of sin at Christ’s arrival emphasizes that salvation descends from without. A man once told me that salvation comes from within. “A person generates it from somewhere inside of them,” this man said. I looked at the guy like he was completely nuts, which of course he was.

I love how nothing changes right away when Christ comes into us. It could humiliate me, but it doesn’t. I’m proud about what a kick in the pants it is. It is yet another torpedo into the stronghold of fleshly confidence. We are so poor, so bad off, so not up for the struggle, that Christ sets up shop in inert bodies. As soon as He gets there, the body is dead. Wow, what a gospel. But it *is* a great gospel. No other gospel is like it. Only His continual habitation changes the way we do business.

THAT’S WHAT YOU THINK

What *does* change immediately is our thinking. What changes at the arrival of God’s spirit is the apprehension, the understanding of how God now sees us. Contrast this with the Circumcision evangel, which as you know is an evangel of sight, feelings, and casting demons into pigs. When Jesus touched you or said something, things happened right away: your withered leg straightened, your eyes became unfuzzed, your ears processed sound again. The woman who touched the hem of Jesus’ garment got healed instantly of her hemorrhage. Jesus said, “Who touched Me?” (Luke 8:45).

Now turn to Paul’s gospel. It is gospel of faith, not sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). It is a gospel of mental realization, not physical performance (Ephesians 1:17-18). What better way to emphasize this than to say, “If Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin.” Wow. What appears at first to be a real downer of a statement ends up being something that you





should laugh your head off at. Don't you get the joke? This is as anti-Joel Osteen as you can get. Only God could say something this apparently depressing and be smiling as He says it because of how truly fantastic it is. It's hilarious, people. Don't you see it? This is even anti-Circumcision evangel. It is *such* a "nothing" announcement that it's really something. I swear you're supposed to laugh at it. It should delight you. Imagine this announcement at a Pentecostal tent revival:

COME TO OUR TENT REVIVAL! WE WILL PRAY OVER YOU WITH SUCH PRAYERS, TEARS, AND MUCH LAYING ON OF HANDS, AND WE GUARANTEE YOU THAT ABSOLUTELY NOTHING WILL CHANGE WITH YOUR SORRY SELF AFTER WE ARE FINISHED, INCLUDING ANY AILMENTS YOU'RE PRESENTLY SUFFERING WITH. YOU WILL LEAVE WITH THE SAME SHIT YOU CAME WITH. FLAPS OPEN AT 7 PM!

REVIVE ME, BABY

Who would go to such a revival? *I would!* I would go laughing all the way because it's such a delicious slap in the face to all the "get healed now" rhetoric, and the "every day is Friday" Joel Osteen malarkey. We are the fortunate members of *such* an anti-religion club, and I don't see how it can get more entertaining than this. Enjoy it, folks, because this "nothing happens" hilarity will only last so long.

The essence of spirituality is that you hold onto Christ no matter what. You believe Christ and God no

matter what. God loves your belief. He's impressed and honored by it. (I know He gave it to you, but what difference does it make? Can't He be impressed by something He did? Haven't you ever stood back to admire something that you've created?) What better way to honor God than to still believe in Him when He refuses to send you off right away into the Merry Old Land of Oz (or Osteen). "If Christ is in you, the body, indeed, is dead because of sin." The body is not only still dead, it is "indeed" dead. Ah, but now here comes the pay-off.

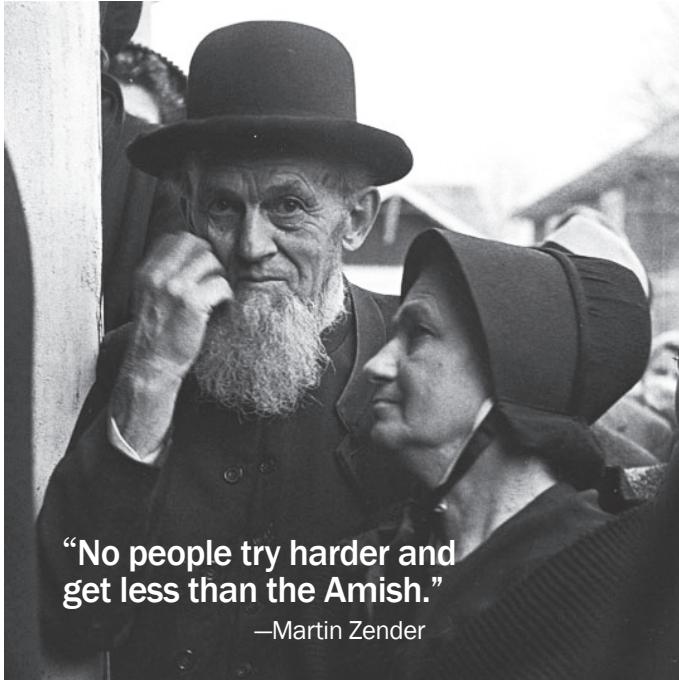
"Yet the spirit is life because of righteousness." *What* righteousness? Why, the declaration by God that you are perfect. This is the righteousness of Romans: God has declared broken and miserable people "righteous." It's the ultimate joke of the universe. We should be rolling on the floor in hysterics at this, that God has chosen the unwise, weak, ignoble, stupid and broken people of this world to give them a righteousness that not even Israel, in all her pomp, circumstance, and gaudy miracles has found. This salvation of ours is God's ultimate poke at all the strain and gravity of religious attainment. Here are people try-

"This salvation of ours is God's ultimate poke at the strain of religious attainment."

ing so damn hard to be righteous, and getting nowhere. I think of the Amish; no people try harder and get less than the Amish. The horses that they ride to the pie-bakes possess more of the spirit of God than they do. At least the horses don't believe in eternal torment. Yet we, like the Corinthians (and like Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus), get bathed in spiritual revelation in spite of ourselves. Paul puts it well here is Romans 9:30-33 from *The Message*:

What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. As it is written:

"See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame."



The thing being attained here is not a perfect life. It’s not the healing of a headache or the straightening of a withered hand. It’s the very righteousness of God. What or who can stand against this? A man healed of blindness can easily become bitter. He eventually gets used to his sight and then the same old complaints of living crop up, only now perhaps the complaints are even worse because he can see stuff now and he doesn’t like what he sees. But credit a man or woman with the righteousness of God and you arm this person with a ready lightning bolt that can fend off all satanic interlopers domestic and foreign: “I’m justified! I’m righteous!”

No matter what crawls up to our throne to threaten our peace—whether it be disappointments, dread, failures, frustrations—they’re incinerated by the lightning smack of righteousness. The knowledge of justification and righteousness, therefore, are the ultimate gifts. This blessed knowledge can withstand anything. What makes us comprehend such a blessing? The spirit of God. It is only by the spirit of God inside of us that we can even grasp that God has called us righteous and justified and treats us as His darlings, through Christ. How better to state this than by saying, “Now if Christ is in you, the body, indeed, is dead because of sin.” Don’t think I’m going to leave you without a repeat of the rest of the story: “Yet the spirit is life because of righteousness.”

Here is more awkward writing from Mr. Awkward himself, for what could he possibly mean by “the spirit is life *because* of righteousness.” He means that this gift

of understanding your God-imputed righteousness—which Paul cannot stop talking about here in Romans—is proof that the spirit of God makes its home in you. Only someone who is filled with spirit can look in the mirror and say, “You are righteous, you idiot.” This is major revelation. If you have it, then you are freighted with wealth—in any world. If you have enough spirit in you to know how God sees you and what is the promise of the fullness of this installment of our inheritance, then you ought to thank God profoundly for it.

What will this tiny dollop of spirit inside of you cause you to understand *next*? Folks, it just keeps getting better. And it all happens on this side of immortality. What I’m going to tell you next will make you have to pinch yourself. If you have a withered hand, then please have someone else pinch you. It will be worth it. What is going to happen to you next will make any bodily infirmity you may have fade into insignificance. Paul is just winding up here in Romans chapter 8. —MZ

(To be continued.)



FROM THE MAIL

The wonderful thing about discovering truth is that it is often attended by a delightful “aha” moment derived from a strange sense that we already knew said truth somewhere in the deepest part of our being. It is a sense of rediscovery—a light switching from low to high resolution, a settling into a place of comfort and wonder, of being home again.

I have so many “aha” and hallelujah moments when reading your newsletters and seeing your videos (and tears and laughter). How can I thank you? You are a conduit of our Father’s Truth into this darkened world, and a blessing from God to those of us broken-hearted, lonely, bruised, battered and seeking—those of us waiting in breathless anticipation for our glorious future and the unfolding of our Father’s amazing plan and purpose.

Praise God for you and your adherence to God’s message of the marvelous evangel of our redemption, our soon coming King ... and the eventual joy of everything being enfolded into the Almighty’s All in All. May our Father encourage you mightily in all you do.

* * *

**SEE NEXT PAGE FOR
UPCOMING MEETINGS!**



There goes the neighborhood.



Martin Zender coming to
**ORLANDO &
BIRMINGHAM**
OCTOBER 17 AND OCTOBER 24

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Hello, everyone. I am on the road and have scheduled two meetings, one in Orlando, and one in Birmingham. These will be intimate living-room gatherings with plenty of time for discussion and Q & A.

Saturday afternoon, October 17, Orlando, FL

For details, contact:

Gary Haight: grh612@gmail.com or (352) 321-2517

Saturday afternoon, October 24, Birmingham, AL

For details, contact:

Laura Johnston: whizchic62@yahoo.com

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!