

THE GOSPEL OF GOD IN ROMANS

Message Eleven The Flesh and the Spirit

Scripture Reading: Rom. 1:9; 2:28-29; 7:17-18, 20-21; 8:4-6, 9-10, 13, 16; 12:11

- Rom 1:9 For God is my witness, whom I ¹serve in my ²spirit in the gospel of His Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you always in my prayers,
- Rom 2:28 ¹For he is ^anot a Jew who is one ²outwardly; neither is ^bcircumcision that which is outward in the flesh.
- Rom 2:29 ¹But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is of the heart, ^{2a}in spirit, not in letter, whose praise is not ³from men, but from God.
- Rom 7:17 Now then *it is* ^ano longer I *that* work it out but sin that ¹dwells in me.
- Rom 7:18 For I ¹know that in me, that is, in my ²flesh, ³nothing good dwells; for ⁴to will is present with me, but to work out the good is not.
- Rom 7:20 But if what I do not will, this I do, *it is* ^ano longer I *that* work it out but sin that dwells in me.
- Rom 7:21 I find then ¹the law with me who wills to do the good, that is, the ²evil is present with me.
- Rom 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be ¹fulfilled in us, who do not ^{2a}walk according to the flesh but according to the ³spirit.
- Rom 8:5 For those who are according to the flesh mind the ¹things of the flesh; but those who are ²according to the spirit, the ³things of the Spirit.
- Rom 8:6 For ¹the mind set on the flesh is ²death, but ³the mind set on the spirit is ^alife and ^bpeace.
- Rom 8:9 But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the ^{1a}Spirit of God ²dwells in you. Yet ³if anyone does not have the ⁴Spirit of Christ, he is not ⁵of Him.
- Rom 8:10 But if ^{1a}Christ is ²in you, though the ³body is ⁴dead because of sin, the ⁵spirit is ⁶life because of ⁷righteousness.
- Rom 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh, you must ¹die, but if by the Spirit you ^{2a}put to death the ³practices of the body, you will live.
- Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself ^awitnesses ¹with ²our ^bspirit that ³we are ^cchildren of God.
- Rom 12:11 Do not be slothful in zeal, *but* be ^{1a}burning in spirit, ^{2b}serving the Lord.

I. The book of Romans is fully focused on life and is of three sections:

- A. The first section is on redemption for justification, the second section is on life for sanctification, and the third section is on building for the Body expressed as the local churches.
- B. In the section on life there are two key terms for our Christian life—*the flesh* and *the spirit*.

II. In order to live by the mingled spirit, the Spirit with our spirit (8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17), we must see what the flesh is:

Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself ^awitnesses ¹with ²our ^bspirit that ³we are ^cchildren of God.

1 Cor 6:17 But he who is ^{1a}joined to the Lord is ^{2b}one spirit.

A. The flesh is the corrupted, polluted, and transmuted body:

1. Man's body was originally pure, but through man's fall Satan injected himself into man, and man's body became the flesh—Gen. 3:6; Rom. 7:18a.

Gen 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make oneself wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband with her, and he ate.

Rom 7:18a For I ¹know that in me, that is, in my ²flesh, ³nothing good dwells; ...

2. Our body is "the body of sin" (6:6) and "the body of this death" (7:24); the body of sin is very active and full of strength in sinning against God, and the body of this death is weak and powerless in acting to please God (v. 18).

Rom 6:6 ¹Knowing this, that our ²old man has been ^{3a}crucified with *Him* in order that the ^{4b}body of sin might be ⁵annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves;

Rom 7:24 ¹Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from ²the body of ³this death?

Rom 7:18 For I ¹know that in me, that is, in my ²flesh, ³nothing good dwells; for ⁴to will is present with me, but to work out the good is not.

3. As long as we are still living, until the day of our redemption, the body of sin and death is always with us—cf. 8:23.
 Rom 8:23 And not only *so*, but we ourselves also, who have ¹the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves ²groan in ourselves, eagerly awaiting ^{3a}sonship, the ^bredemption of our body.
4. The word *flesh* also refers to our entire fallen being; man is totally flesh because the fallen being today is under the dominion of the fallen flesh—3:20; Gen. 6:3a.
 Rom 3:20 Because ^aout of the works of the law no flesh shall be justified before Him; for ^bthrough the law is the clear knowledge of sin.
 Gen 6:3a And Jehovah said, My Spirit will not strive with man forever, for he indeed is flesh; ...
- B. The flesh is the "meeting hall" and the compound of sin, death, and Satan; the flesh is a hopeless case and can never be improved—Rom. 7:17-18, 21; cf. John 17:15.
 Rom 7:17 Now then *it is* ^ano longer I *that* work it out but sin that ¹dwells in me.
 Rom 7:18 For I ¹know that in me, that is, in my ²flesh, ³nothing good dwells; for ⁴to will is present with me, but to work out the good is not.
 Rom 7:21 I find then ¹the law with me who wills to do the good, that is, the ²evil is present with me.
 John 17:15 I do not ask that You would take them ¹out of the world, but that You would ^akeep them out of *the hands of* the ^{2b}evil one.
- C. The flesh is at enmity with God, not subject to the law of God, and can never please God—Rom. 8:7-8.
 Rom 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.
 Rom 8:8 And ¹those who are ²in the flesh cannot please God.
- D. Sin is Satan himself as "the evil" in our flesh—John 17:15; Rom. 7:21:
 John 17:15 I do not ask that You would take them ¹out of the world, but that You would ^akeep them out of *the hands of* the ^{2b}evil one.
 Rom 7:21 I find then ¹the law with me who wills to do the good, that is, the ²evil is present with me.
- "The evil" is the evil life, nature, and character of Satan himself, who is the indwelling sin in us; when sin is dormant within us, it is merely sin, but when it is aroused in us by our willing to do the good, it becomes "the evil."
 - Sin can deceive us, kill us (v. 11), lord it over us, that is, have dominion over us (6:12, 14), and cause us to do things against our will (7:17, 20); all these activities show that sin is a living person.
 Rom 7:11 For sin, seizing the opportunity ¹through the commandment, ^adeceived me and ^bthrough it killed *me*.
 Rom 6:12 ¹Do not let ^asin therefore reign in your mortal body so that you obey ²the body's ^blusts;
 Rom 6:14 For ^asin will not ¹lord it over you, ²for you are ³not under the law but under ^bgrace.
 Rom 7:17 Now then *it is* ^ano longer I *that* work it out but sin that ¹dwells in me.
 Rom 7:20 But if what I do not will, this I do, *it is* ^ano longer I *that* work it out but sin that dwells in me.
 - Sin is the evil nature of Satan, the evil one, who, having injected himself into man through Adam's fall, has now become the very sinful nature dwelling, acting, and working in fallen man—cf. Matt. 16:22-23.
 Matt 16:22 And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, *God* be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by ¹no means happen to You!
 Matt 16:23 But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind Me, ^{1a}Satan! ²You are a stumbling block to Me, for you are ³not setting your ^bmind on the things of God, but on the things of men.
 - In Galatians 2:20 Paul says, "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me"; in Romans 7:17 he says, "It is no longer I...but sin that dwells in me," showing that sin is another person within us.
 Gal 2:20 I am ^{1a}crucified with Christ; and *it is* ²no longer I *who* live, but *it is* ^{3b}Christ *who* lives in me; and the ⁴life which I now live in the flesh I ^clive in ⁵faith, the ^dfaith ⁶of the ⁷Son of God, who ^{8e}loved me and ^fgave Himself up for me.
 Rom 7:17 Now then *it is* ^ano longer I *that* work it out but sin that ¹dwells in me.

5. In our flesh no good thing dwells, because the flesh is fully possessed, taken over, by Satan as sin—v. 18a.

Rom 7:18 For I ¹know that in me, that is, in my ²flesh, ³nothing good dwells; ...

III. For the sake of His economy, God in His wisdom and sovereignty uses our sinful, ugly flesh to force us to turn to our spirit so that we may gain more of the Spirit for His building by the growth of God in us—Col. 2:19; Zech. 4:6:

- Col 2:19 And ¹not ^aholding the Head, ^{2b}out from whom all the ³Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the ⁴joints and ⁵sinews, ⁶grows with the ⁷growth of God.
- Zech 4:6 And he answered and spoke to me, saying, This is the word of Jehovah to Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says Jehovah of hosts.
- A. We are either in the spirit or in the flesh; there is no third place for us to be; the believer is a miniature garden of Eden—with God as the tree of life in his spirit, Satan as the tree of knowledge in his flesh, and his mind in between—Rom. 8:6.
Rom 8:6 For ¹the mind set on the flesh is ²death, but ³the mind set on the spirit is ^alife and ^bpeace.
- B. Judicially speaking, both Satan and our flesh were condemned once for all on the cross (v. 3; John 3:14; Heb. 2:14; 2 Cor. 5:21), but God allowed the flesh to remain with us to help us and force us to turn to Christ in our spirit and have no more confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:3).
Rom 8:3 For that which the ¹law could ²not do, in that it was ^aweak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the ³likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh,
John 3:14 And as ^aMoses ^blifted up the ¹serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,
Heb 2:14 Since therefore the children have shared in ^ablood and flesh, He also Himself in like manner ^bpartook of the same, that through ^cdeath He might ^{1d}destroy him who has the might of ^edeath, that is, the ^fdevil,
2 Cor 5:21 Him who did ¹not know ^{2a}sin He made sin on our behalf that we might become the ^{3b}righteousness of God ⁴in Him.
Phil 3:3 For we are the ^{1a}circumcision, the ones who ²serve by the Spirit of God and ^bboast in Christ Jesus and ³have no confidence in the ^{4c}flesh,
- C. Without the help rendered by the sinful, ugly flesh, we would not be as desperate to gain the Lord or to have Him wrought into us—Rom. 8:6, 13.
Rom 8:6 For ¹the mind set on the flesh is ²death, but ³the mind set on the spirit is ^alife and ^bpeace.
Rom 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh, you must ¹die, but if by the Spirit you ^{2a}put to death the ³practices of the body, you will live.
- D. Our goal may be holiness or spirituality or victory, but God's goal is to work Himself into us; often when we are in a difficult situation, we are more open to the Lord and more willing to turn to Him and allow Him to work Himself into us—vv. 28-29.
Rom 8:28 And we know that ¹all things ²work together for ³good to those who ⁴love God, to those who are ^acalled according to *His* ⁵purpose.
Rom 8:29 Because those whom He ¹foreknew, He also ^{2a}predestinated to be ³conformed to the ^bimage of His Son, that He might be the ^{4c}Firstborn among ⁵many ^dbrothers;
- E. If we seek Him, even the sinful compound of the flesh will become a help to us in gaining the Lord; because we fail so often, we are desperate to turn to the spirit, and in this way we gain more of the Spirit—cf. Exo. 23:23, 29-30; Judg. 2:21—3:4.
Exo 23:23 For My Angel will go before you and bring you to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off.
Exo 23:29 I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the animals of the field multiply against you.
Exo 23:30 Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have become fruitful and inherit the land.
Judg 2:21 I for My part will no longer dispossess from before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died,
Judg 2:22 In order to test Israel through them as to whether or not they will keep the way of Jehovah by walking in it, as their fathers kept it.

- Judg 2:23 So Jehovah left these nations, not dispossessing them quickly, and did not deliver them into the hand of Joshua.
- Judg 3:1 And these are the nations that Jehovah left in order that through them He might test Israel (that is, all who had not known all the battles of Canaan),
- Judg 3:2 But only so that the generations of the children of Israel might learn to know war, at least those who had not previously known the battles:
- Judg 3:3 The five lords of the Philistines and all the Canaanites and the Sidonians and the Hivites who dwelt on Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-hermon to the entrance of Hamath.
- Judg 3:4 And they were for the testing of Israel, to know whether they would listen to the commandments of Jehovah, which He commanded their fathers through Moses.

F. Our hardships, defeats, failures, and disappointments force us to realize that there is no hope in the flesh; the flesh is good only to force us to turn to Christ in our spirit, to press us into the spirit, to make us desperate to get into the spirit, and to keep us watchful to stay in the spirit—Matt. 26:41; Eph. 6:17-18.

Matt 26:41 ^aWatch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The ¹spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Eph 6:17 And receive the ^{1a}helmet of salvation and the ^{2b}sword of the Spirit, ³which *Spirit* is the ^{4c}word of God,

Eph 6:18 ¹By means of all ^{2a}prayer and petition, praying at ^bevery time in ^{3c}spirit and ^{4d}watching unto this in ⁵all perseverance and ⁶petition concerning all the saints,

G. The Lord does not care for whether or not we have a victory; the Lord cares for only one thing—that we gain Him as the Spirit—Phil. 3:8; 2 Cor. 3:17-18.

Phil 3:8 ¹But moreover I ²also count ^aall things to be loss on account of the ³excellency of the ^bknowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, ⁴on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count *them* as ⁵refuse that I may ^{6c}gain Christ

2 Cor 3:17 ¹And the ²Lord is the ^{3a}Spirit; and where the ^{4b}Spirit of the Lord is, there is ^{5c}freedom.

2 Cor 3:18 ¹But ²we all with ³unveiled face, ^{4a}beholding and reflecting like a ^{5b}mirror the ^{6c}glory of the Lord, are ⁷being ^dtransformed into the ⁸same ^eimage ⁹from glory to ^fglory, even as ¹⁰from the ¹¹Lord Spirit.

IV. Our spirit is a wonderful compound—compounded with Christ, the Spirit, and grace—2 Tim. 4:22; Rom. 8:16; Gal. 6:18:

2 Tim 4:22 The Lord be with your ^{1a}spirit. ^{2b}Grace be with you.

Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself ^awitnesses ¹with ²our ^bspirit that ³we are ^cchildren of God.

Gal 6:18 The ^{1a}grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your ²spirit, ^{3b}brothers. Amen.

A. God wants us to walk according to this wonderful compound spirit (to have our being and our living with all that we say and do according to the spirit)—Rom. 8:4; Phil. 1:19; 1 Cor. 6:17; cf. Exo. 30:23-25.

Rom 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be ¹fulfilled in us, who do not ^{2a}walk according to the flesh but according to the ³spirit.

Phil 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to ^{1a}salvation through ²your ^bpetition and *the* ³bountiful ^csupply of the ^{4d}Spirit of Jesus Christ,

1 Cor 6:17 But he who is ^{1a}joined to the Lord is ^{2b}one spirit.

Exo 30:23 You also take the finest spices: of flowing myrrh five hundred shekels, and of fragrant cinnamon half as much, two hundred fifty shekels, and of fragrant calamus two hundred fifty shekels,

Exo 30:24 And of cassia five hundred shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil.

Exo 30:25 And you shall make it a holy anointing oil, a perfume compounded according to the perfumer's art; it shall be a holy anointing oil.

B. Only the persons who walk according to the spirit can be the proper members for the building up of a local church; if we do not have such a walk, sooner or later we will be a trouble to our local church—Gal. 5:16-26.

Gal 5:16 But I say, ^{1a}Walk ^bby the ²Spirit and you shall by no means ^cfulfill the ^dlust of the flesh.

- Gal 5:17 For the ¹flesh lusts ^aagainst the ²Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these ³oppose each other that you would not do the things that you ^bdesire.
- Gal 5:18 But if you are ^aled by the ¹Spirit, you are ^bnot under the law.
- Gal 5:19 And the ¹works of the flesh are manifest, which are such things as ²fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,
- Gal 5:20 ¹Idolatry, ^asorcery, ²enmities, ^bstrife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, ³factions, ^cdivisions, ^{4d}sects,
- Gal 5:21 ^aEnvyings, ¹bouts of drunkenness, carousings, and things like these, of which I tell you beforehand, even as I have said before, that those who practice such things will ^bnot ²inherit the kingdom of God.
- Gal 5:22 But the ^{1a}fruit of the Spirit is ^blove, ^cjoy, ^dpeace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
- Gal 5:23 Meekness, ^aself-control; against such things there is ^bno law.
- Gal 5:24 ¹But they who are ^aof Christ Jesus ²have ^{3b}crucified the ^cflesh with its passions and its lusts.
- Gal 5:25 If we ¹live by the Spirit, let us also ^{2a}walk by the Spirit.
- Gal 5:26 Let us ¹not become ^avainglorious, provoking one another, ^benvying one another.

C. Romans reveals that whatever we are, whatever we do, and whatever we have must be in spirit; this will keep us from the vanity of religion—1:9; 7:6; Phil. 3:3:

- Rom 1:9 For God is my witness, whom I ¹serve in my ²spirit in the gospel of His Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you always in my prayers,
- Rom 7:6 But now we have been ¹discharged from the law, having died to that in which we were held, so that we ²serve in ³newness of ⁴spirit and not in oldness of letter.
- Phil 3:3 For we are the ^{1a}circumcision, the ones who ²serve by the Spirit of God and ^bboast in Christ Jesus and ³have no confidence in the ^{4c}flesh,

1. The reality of all spiritual things depends on the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of God is in our spirit; hence, the reality of all spiritual matters depends on our spirit, not on anything apart from our spirit—Rom. 8:5-6, 9-11.

- Rom 8:5 For those who are according to the flesh mind the ¹things of the flesh; but those who are ²according to the spirit, the ³things of the Spirit.
- Rom 8:6 For ¹the mind set on the flesh is ²death, but ³the mind set on the spirit is ^alife and ^bpeace.
- Rom 8:9 But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the ^{1a}Spirit of God ²dwells in you. Yet ³if anyone does not have the ⁴Spirit of Christ, he is not ⁵of Him.
- Rom 8:10 But if ^{1a}Christ is ²in you, though the ³body is ⁴dead because of sin, the ⁵spirit is ⁶life because of ⁷righteousness.
- Rom 8:11 And if the ¹Spirit of ²the One who raised Jesus from the dead ^{3a}dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also ^{4b}give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

2. Whatever is in us is vanity unless it is "inwardly," in our spirit, not "outwardly," in the flesh—2:28-29; 8:4, 10, 13; 12:11.

- Rom 2:28 ¹For he is ^anot a Jew who is one ²outwardly; neither is ^bcircumcision that which is outward in the flesh.
- Rom 2:29 ¹But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is of the heart, ^{2a}in spirit, not in letter, whose praise is not ³from men, but from God.
- Rom 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be ¹fulfilled in us, who do not ^{2a}walk according to the flesh but according to the ³spirit.
- Rom 8:10 But if ^{1a}Christ is ²in you, though the ³body is ⁴dead because of sin, the ⁵spirit is ⁶life because of ⁷righteousness.
- Rom 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh, you must ¹die, but if by the Spirit you ^{2a}put to death the ³practices of the body, you will live.
- Rom 12:11 Do not be slothful in zeal, *but* be ^{1a}burning in spirit, ^{2b}serving the Lord.

3. Everything that God is to us is in our spirit—8:16; 2 Tim. 4:22.

- Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself ^awitnesses ¹with ²our ^bspirit that ³we are ^cchildren of God.
- 2 Tim 4:22 The Lord be with your ^{1a}spirit. ^{2b}Grace be with you.

D. God has reserved the human spirit for His purpose—Zech. 12:1; Prov. 20:27.

- Zech 12:1 The burden of the word of Jehovah concerning Israel. Thus declares Jehovah, who stretches forth the heavens and lays the foundations of the earth and forms the spirit of man within him,
- Prov 20:27 The spirit of man is the lamp of Jehovah, Searching all the innermost parts of the inner being.

- E. Our spirit today is the real Bethel, the house of God and the gate of heaven; when we turn to our spirit, we are in the third heaven—Eph. 2:22; Gen. 28:12, 17, 19.
 Eph 2:22 In whom ¹you ²also are being built together into a ^{3a}dwelling place of God ^bin ⁴spirit.
 Gen 28:12 And he dreamed: There was a ladder set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.
 Gen 28:17 And he was afraid and said, How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.
 Gen 28:19 And he called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz previously.
- F. When we are in our spirit, we are in the Holy of Holies, touching the throne of grace and being sustained by Christ to live a heavenly life on earth—Heb. 10:22a; 4:16.
 Heb 10:22a Let us ^{1a}come forward to *the* ^b*Holy of Holies* with a true heart in full ^cassurance of faith, ...
 Heb 4:16 Let us therefore ^acome forward with boldness to the ¹throne of grace that we may receive ^{2b}mercy and find ^cgrace for timely help.
- G. In our spirit we can overcome the world, and the evil one cannot touch us; the only way to overcome Satan is to stay in the high tower of our regenerated spirit—1 John 5:4, 18; John 3:6; 14:30.
 1 John 5:4 For ¹everything that has been ²begotten of God ^{3a}overcomes the ⁴world; and this is the ^bvictory which has overcome the world—our ⁵faith.
 1 John 5:18 We know that everyone who is ¹begotten of God ^adoes not sin, but ²he who has been begotten of God ^{3b}keeps himself, and the ⁴evil one does not ⁵touch him.
 John 3:6 That which is ^aborn ¹of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the ²Spirit is spirit.
 John 14:30 I will no longer speak much with you, for the ^aruler of the world is coming, and in Me he has nothing;
- H. Because Christ as the life-giving Spirit has dispensed Himself into our spirit, our spirit is life (Gk. *zoe*)—Rom. 8:10.
 Rom 8:10 But if ^{1a}Christ is ²in you, though the ³body is ⁴dead because of sin, the ⁵spirit is ⁶life because of ⁷righteousness.
- I. Our spirit is the place of oneness; we can be one only if we worship God in our spirit, which is today's Jerusalem—John 4:23-24; Psa. 133.
 John 4:23 But ^aan hour is coming, and it is now, when the true worshippers will worship the Father ^bin spirit and truthfulness, for the Father also seeks such to worship Him.
 John 4:24 ¹God is ²Spirit, and those who ³worship Him must worship ^ain ⁴spirit and ⁵truthfulness.
 Psa 133:1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell in unity!
 Psa 133:2 It is like the fine oil upon the head That ran down upon the beard, Upon Aaron's beard, That ran down upon the hem of his garments;
 Psa 133:3 Like the dew of Hermon That came down upon the mountains of Zion. For there Jehovah commanded the blessing: Life forever.
- J. Christ, the heavenly and spiritual food, is in our spirit, and we need to eat Him to be His testimony and grow up into Him for the building up of His Body—John 6:57, 63.
 John 6:57 As the living Father has sent Me and I ^alive because of the Father, so he who ¹eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.
 John 6:63 ^aIt is the ¹Spirit who gives life; the ²flesh profits nothing; the ³words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.