

Study 10: The Holy Spirit

Introduction

Romans chapter 8 tells us more about the Holy Spirit than any other chapter in the whole of the New Testament.

In this study, we want to note what Paul says, and what we can learn about the Holy Spirit. We will primarily confine ourselves to Romans chapter 8.

Body of the Study

- 8:1 *(We) who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*
- 8:2 *...the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free...*
- 8:4 *(We) do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit*
- 8:5 *...those of the flesh mind the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, (mind) the things of the Spirit.*
- 8:6 *...the mind of the flesh is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*
- 8:9 *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 none of His.*
- 8:10 *If Christ is in us, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*
- 8:11 *But 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.*
- 8:13 *...if (you live) by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*
- 8:14 *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.*
- 8:15 *For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out...*
- 8:16 *The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.*
- 8:23 *...we have the firstfruits of the Spirit...*
- 8:26 *Likewise the Spirit helps our weaknesses. For we do not know what we ought to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.*
- 8:27 *Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

Homework and preparation for next week:

- Read the notes as a review of the study.
- Read chapter 9 in preparation for the next study.

Notes for study 10: The Holy Spirit

Introduction

In Romans chapter 8 we learn more about the Holy Spirit than from any other chapter in the whole of the New Testament. The subject of the Holy Spirit, and how it dwells in the Christian has been one of much debate and discussion. We need to draw the context of the whole Roman letter, note that Paul has not yet been to Rome, and that one of the purposes of his intended visit was that he “...*might impart unto you some spiritual gift, to establish you in the faith...*” (1:11).

In this study, we want to note what Paul says, and what we learn about the Holy Spirit. We will primarily confine ourselves to Romans chapter 8. We should also note that the context is not always absolutely clear as to whether Paul is talking about God’s Spirit (ie the Holy Spirit) or our spirit. And the capitals do not make the answer absolute either, as they are not present in the original language – however they may show that the Greek scholars who translated the scriptures thought that Paul had the Holy Spirit in mind. The problem is that in many cases their usage has been reversed (in both directions) between the KJV & some of the later translations (NKJV & RSV). And to add to the confusion, there is widespread diversity between the translators as to how they think it should be translated.

The word translated “spirit” is the Greek work *pneuma* – Gk 4151 and is translated as spirit (often *ghost* in the KJV), *life*, or *mind*. W.E. Vine says it “primarily denotes the wind...the spirit, which like the wind is invisible, immaterial, and powerful.”

Jesus used exactly that analogy in Jn 3:8.

We will take each verse from Romans 8 that mentions the *pneuma* (spirit) and discuss it.

Body of the Study

8:1 *(We) who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*

Some texts omit the latter part of verse 1. But nevertheless, our purpose is to understand what we can learn about the HS from the chapter. We learn here that the HS (if it is the HS and not our spirit) sets in place the way that we walk with God. How He does that is not taught from this verse, and could be the subject of much speculation, but Paul will cover some of that later in the chapter.

8:2 *...the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free...*

Paul is contrasting our spiritual lives in Christ with our fleshly lives outside of Christ. We learn that there is something about the spirit that Paul describes as law, and through this law we are made free from the other law – the law of sin and death. The question is, is it the HS that does this? In a way the HS does do this because we only have life in Christ if we are “...*born of water and of the spirit...*”

8:4 *(We) do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit*

This is almost identical to 8:1, and there is nothing additional that we learn about the HS that we have not already observed. But Paul has in mind the contrast between our old nature and our new nature.

8:5 *...those of the flesh mind the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, (mind) the things of the Spirit.*

Paul is contrasting the old with the new, and to draw anything specific about the HS goes beyond what the verse says.

- 8:6 *...the mind of the flesh is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*
 When we have this spirit (and only then) do we have life and peace. Again the contrast is between the old and the new. But it is also true that only when we have the HS (by becoming Christians - obeying the gospel) that we get the blessings.
- 8:9 *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 none of His.*
 Paul specifically identifies the Spirit with God – “*the Spirit of God*”, and “*the Spirit of Christ*” It is true that there is a contrast of the old nature with the new nature, but the spirit belonging to God and to Christ can only be the HS. What we learn from this verse is that if we don’t have the HS, then we don’t belong to Christ.
- 8:10 *If Christ is in us, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*
 The contrast is between flesh and spirit (our spirit) rather than the HS.
- 8:11 *But 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.*
 The usage is quite specific – *the Spirit of Christ*, and *His Spirit* can only be the HS. We learn that the HS dwells in us, and we learn (from some translations) that it is a person – who dwells in you – although some translations have “that dwells in you”.
- 8:13 *...if (you live) by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*
 Flesh and spirit are contrasted. The question is, does the HS help us to put to death the deeds of the flesh? The answer is yes, and Paul says so in 8:26. When we receive the HS is when we put to death our former life (chapter 6). So, we learn that the HS has an action (in some way) in putting to death our fleshly ways.
- 8:14 *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.*
 The contrast is again between flesh and spirit – but Paul is again specific – “*the Spirit of God*”. We learn that the HS leads us in some way, but we are not told how. It is true that we have the New Testament by the action of the HS giving inspiration to the writers, and in that sense, we are led by the HS acting through the medium of the word. In the 1st century church, the HS acted in a more direct way to lead God’s people – through the apostles and the miraculous gifts. But the HS acted to guide the apostles in a providential way as well as through direct action (see how he controlled Paul, Silas & Luke in Acts 16:6-10). In the same way, we are led by the HS as God (providentially) controls events in our lives to bring about His will.
- 8:15 *For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out...*
 Paul contrasts here our nature (spirit) with THE Spirit. Our nature puts us in bondage – but the HS (by implication) gives us life. We learn that through the HS (ie through our process of conversion, when we receive the HS) that we are adopted as God’s sons.
- 8:16 *The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.*

Paul here contrasts the HS (*THE Spirit*) with our spirit. We learn that the HS has a specific action. It bears witness with our spirit. Paul again uses the personal pronoun ...the spirit himself... The action of the HS is to testify to God that we are His (gives assurance to us as christians – for this is the purpose that Paul is addressing in the chapter). But the HS also helps us as we bear witness to others. Jesus said that The HS would tell the apostles what to say (Jn 16:13; Mt 10:1-26), and likewise the HS can (I am not saying always does) bring to our remembrance the things of God’s word.

8:23 *... we have the firstfruits of the Spirit...*

We learn that the HS is given to us as the firstfruits – the down-payment – the guarantee, (the KJV uses the old English term “the earnest”) against our salvation. The contrast is between *firstfruits*, and *main harvest*. When we have the firstfruits, we can be assured that we will receive the main harvest. The HS is the firstfruits, and because we have that, then we can be assured of the main harvest, which is the redemption of our bodies.

8:26 *Likewise the Spirit helps our weaknesses. For we do not know what we ought to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.*

The HS himself – again Paul uses the personal pronoun – is specified with some of the specific actions that He does for us. He makes intercession between us and God.

8:27 *Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

We learn that God knows the mind of the HS, and again the action of the HS in making intercession for the saints with God (in accordance with the will of God) is stated.

Conclusion

From this chapter, we can see that there is a *personal* action of the Holy Spirit, who in some way interacts with our spirit. We must not go beyond what is written and develop fanciful ideas as to what and how this might be. Neither should we reject what the scripture says, just because we can’t rationalise how the Holy Spirit acts in our lives.

As an illustration, when we look back at our lives, there are events and circumstances that have happened that would not have been of our own choosing. When we look back, we can see the hand of God working providentially in our lives. The problem is dealing with that here and now. How do we know what it is that God wants? If we are spiritual, then we can step out in faith, and allow God to work in our lives, having full assurance of faith.

I’m not big on testimonies, but there have been circumstances that have happened in my life that have worked beyond my imagination for the furtherance of the gospel. They would never have eventuated had things been left up to me. But God worked (providentially) to bring things about. One of the outcomes is that you are now reading these notes.