

"Pardon me, but do you have the Spirit?"

Romans 8:8-11 NIV

“Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. (But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.

“And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.”

How would you describe your life today?

- **Do you have momentum in the right direction?**
- **Or do wearily plod along feeling off-course?**
- **Perhaps you feel and mired at a standstill?**

What best describes your life status?

We encounter countless off-ramps.
And come across many side-streets
Chance decisions often change our life-direction.



In some respects, we enjoy freedom of choice.
Many feel free to choose what they wish.

Thank God, he allows us to select certain routes.

Our text warns, however, that if we aim to please God, we must wisely choose.

The Apostle Peter agreed and clearly stated that only two life statuses exist.

He described the lifestyle of people committed to God:¹

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, **that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.**

Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

Peter identified our primary Christian task.

Those who belong to God constantly, openly, publicly praise Him for saving them.

Peter also said only two states of being exist. We're saved or not saved; no in-between exists.

God allows no fence-straddling half commitments. One has either received God's mercy in Christ and is saved, or has not received mercy and is not saved.

Our Romans text confirms that truth: “You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you.

¹ 1 Peter 2:9,10 NIV

And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."

We're either in Christ—in the Spirit, or we're outside and dead as verse 6 stated,

"The mind of sinful man is death."

What's the state of your life?

I've known many walking corpses, dead long before the doctors pronounced them deceased.

Though dead, they walked and talked for years.

"Bob," you say, "you've been watching too much weird TV!"



No, many people lack the Spirit of God. For e.g.:

1. The fellow who demanded--adamant that he would not leave the church building till I gave him money. That big, red-headed, able-bodied, ex-con was losing in life, but faulted his mother for his state of affairs.
2. **Another well-dressed man approached me at an L.A. community-fair church booth asking for an appointment to talk with me. He behaved bizarrely—not unlike biblical descriptions of demon-possessed people. After a few sessions I realized he had been involved in some vile, unspeakable things**

that he wouldn't give up. Until he quit those activities, no one could do anything for him.

3. **It included several older church members who worked hard, knew the Bible well, but wouldn't admit to certain negative behavior.**

Doctors would have declared all these people to be in reasonably good health.

Yet they were dead.

These might seem extreme examples, but millions more "ordinary folks" are just as dead.

They're dead because they lack God's Spirit.

"The mind of sinful man is death."

How do we get the Spirit of God?

How do we keep the Spirit?

First, we must recognize death's hold on us.

I'm not speaking about ordinary human aging, which the Lord built into all of us.

I refer to thinking and actions lethal to both body and spirit.

Guilt, for example.

God designed us to live according to His pure moral standards, which the world often considers dated and outmoded.

Immoral behavior creates guilt that often leads to depression, which many professionals treat with drugs.

Most people try to soothe guilt with alcohol and faster paced lifestyle.

Therapy sessions, increased alcohol, drug consumption, or even hard work cannot remedy guilt's effects.

We cure and resolve guilt by not committing wrong and by living as God designed us.

No other antidote exists.

Jesus also cautioned us about: feuding, doubt, hate, worry, and fearing anyone but God.

When we don't resolve these as God's wants, they affect our bodies and our minds.

In short, they kill us.



How do we get the Spirit and life?

1. The Apostle Peter gave us the answer.

Peter replied, "Repent (*repent* means to quit doing wrong and do God's will) and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."²

Many were baptized as babies, so their baptism had no connection with repentance.

² Acts 2:38 NIV

Remember when Jesus told Nicodemus that he had to be "born again; born of water and Spirit"?³

Babies are innocent.

They have no consciousness of right and wrong—of sin.

Once we become adults with conscious knowledge that we should obey God, we must be born again.

Jesus taught repentance and being born again.⁴

All New Testament examples of baptism indicate that those being baptized were:

- old enough to be conscious of sin;
- advanced enough to have faith in God;
- and mature enough to repent.

Paul noted what happened when the Colossian church members all gave their lives to Christ:

"Having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³When you were dead in your sins . . ."⁵

Before God's Spirit can live in us, we need cleaning.

³ John 3:5

⁴ Matthew 4:17; 11:21; 18:3; Luke 13:1-5

⁵ Colossians 2:12, 13a NIV

**Once we renounce sin,
commit to God's guidance,
and are forgiven and cleansed in baptism,
God's Spirit can dwell in us.
God's forgiveness in Christ
covers every kind of disobedience.
To be forgiven, however,
we must stop doing wrong,
turn the management of our lives to Jesus,
and publicly show oneness with Christ in baptism.**

FORGIVENESS

People in Corinth, Greece, committed various kinds of wrong, but they quit when they gave their lives to Christ and were baptized into him.
Paul noted many of their former sins and then wrote:

"That is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."⁶

No one puts fresh milk in an old bottle that's been sitting around for years—not without thoroughly cleaning the bottle.

About God's Spirit, Acts 2:38 succinctly says:

⁶ I Corinthians 6:11 Paul listed some of their former behavior in verses 9 & 10 and also earlier in 5:9-11.

"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

That's how we receive God's Spirit.

2. How do we retain the Holy Spirit?

If we carry unresolved anger, bitterness, or behavior displeasing to God, His Spirit leaves us.

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."⁷

**When we hold hate and anger, we say to God,
"I don't trust you to take care of this matter."
This grieves God in the same way it upsets us when others don't trust us to carry out our responsibilities.**

We also consult God before we make decisions, especially asking for boldness to do his will.

Trending events indicate that Christians may soon face hard choices of whether to obey God or human orders.

⁷ Ephesians 4:30-32 NIV

Government officials commanded Peter, John and other first century church leaders not to preach about Jesus.

The apostles and church elders did not take up arms, call their attorneys, demand citizens' rights, or ask for the court's help.

They simply prayed, asking for courage to keep witnessing for Christ.

In stunning fashion, God granted them boldness.

I pray that all believers will:

read Acts 2-5 this week;

pray as the church did in 4: 23-31;

boldly speak about Christ and your faith in God.



We grieve the Spirit when we disobey God and act without consulting Him for guidance.

3. Where does the Holy Spirit take us?

He leads to abundant life now and life in heaven.

"If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you."

The Lord wants us to be obedient citizens of the nation where we reside.

Yet our greatest allegiance is to God's kingdom.

To the faithful, our "King" promises:

"Our citizenship is in heaven and we eagerly await a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body."⁸

We choose our citizenship.

Do you follow Jesus' example of obedience to the Father and stay alert in His Holy Spirit?

"If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."

Our choices are: A) to live among the walking dead, who hope in the standards of this world and its walking dead rulers;

B) choose to live in love, faith, and hope in Christ.

Jesus alone overcame wrongdoing and came back from the dead, and he will raise you... if his Spirit lives in you.

Meanwhile, a good conscience now makes life much simpler and easier.

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⁸ Phil. 3:20, 21 NIV