

THE SPIRIT OF GOD AND OF CHRIST

Romans 8v9

We are still in the early stages of our series on the Doctrine of God. We have looked at Genesis 1v1 (“In the beginning God”) and Colossians 2v9 (“in Christ the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.”).

So now we turn to God the Holy Spirit. Our text is Romans 8v9 where the Spirit is described as “the Spirit of God” and “the Spirit of Christ”. This simple description says something of real depth about the mighty and mysterious doctrine of God as Trinity: **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**

Romans 8 is one of the great chapters in the New Testament on the Christian enjoying life in the Holy Spirit. But our focus will not be so much on the sweep or the detail of the apostle’s argument but on his threefold description of “the Spirit”, “the Spirit of God” and, especially “the Spirit of Christ”.

The Spirit.

Today “spirit” is such a vague word; but the Hebrew word RUACH was very specific. Jim Packer writes: *“‘Spirit’, like all biblical terms that refer to God, is a picture-word with vivid, precise, and colourful meaning. It pictures breath breathed or panted out, as when you blow out the candles on your birthday cake or blow up balloons or puff and blow as you run. ‘Spirit’ in this sense was what the big bad wolf was threatening the little pigs with when he told them, ‘I’ll huff, and I’ll puff, and I’ll blow your house down!’ The picture is of air made to move vigorously, even violently, and the thought that the picture expresses is of energy let loose, executive force invading, power in exercise, life demonstrated in activity.”* (J.I.Packer: ‘Keep in Step with the Spirit’ IVP. 1984)

The Spirit of God

Most of us are familiar with the description “the Spirit of God”. It runs right through the Old Testament. This is the RUACH of God: God’s power in action; God, present and active with His people by the Spirit of God. Therefore the Spirit is described in ways which speak of God Himself - not as some abstract force or vague influence.

When the Spirit does something, *it is God at work*. For example, in the beginning, at creation: *“and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”*(Genesis 1v2)

Where the Spirit of God is, *God is*. *“Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.”* (Psalm 139v7,8)

What God feels, the Spirit feels. Isaiah speaks of God's dealings with His people Israel. *"In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit."* (Isaiah 63v9,10)

When the Spirit speaks, it is *God who speaks*. In 2 Samuel 23v2,3, King David reflects on the inspiration behind his Psalms *"The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue. The God of Israel spoke, the Rock of Israel said to me..."* This is also true of the Old Testament prophets: *"men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit"*. (2 Peter 1v21)

So the Spirit is the Spirit of God. But now we have a third description.

The Spirit of Christ

The "Spirit of God" is also described in our text as the "Spirit of Christ". There are other New Testament texts which say much the same. e.g. "the Spirit of Jesus" (Acts 16v6,7), "the Spirit of (God's) Son" (Galatians 4v6) and "the Spirit of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 1v19)

This shouldn't come as a surprise to us because Jesus *is* God. If Jesus is God then the Spirit of God is also, by definition, the Spirit of Christ.

So let's be clear about this, even if it means stating the obvious. This is not describing two Spirits. The Spirit of God *is* the Spirit of Christ. The terms "Spirit of God" and "Spirit of Christ" are interchangeable.

But why is Jesus so associated with the Spirit? Why do the New Testament writers speak so specifically of "the Spirit of Christ"?

1. The Spirit is the Spirit of the Christ – the Messiah

We have to remember that "Christ" is not Jesus' surname. Paul is writing about the "the Spirit of the Messiah".

You might think this word "Messiah" would be inaccessible to most people today. After all, it is a Biblical term describing the Jewish hope of a mighty deliverer, one who would be a prophet, a priest a king; he would rescue Israel; he would reign on David's throne and his kingdom would last for ever. Some Scriptures see him as a suffering servant others as a triumphant warrior.

Yet, amazingly, the word is used today by people without any Biblical know-how. A few years ago Kevin Keegan was hailed as Newcastle United's "messiah." But it all ended in tears! After all the great hopes of a new era he proved to be a false messiah.

One of the great characteristics of the longed for Messiah of Israel was that he would be full of the Spirit of God. The very title "Messiah", or "Christ", means "anointed one" i.e. anointed with the Spirit.

Isaiah 11v1,2 *“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him - the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.”*

So when Jesus steps centre stages He is the man of the Spirit *par excellence*. His conception is through the Holy Spirit with Mary. The Spirit descends on Jesus at His baptism He is full of the Spirit as He goes to face the tempter in the desert He returns in the power of the Spirit. At Nazareth He announces that He is the messianic figure Isaiah had prophesied: *“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me...”* His miracles are by the power of the Spirit; the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk – and the dead are raised. He is described as full of joy through the Holy Spirit. He is said to have been given the Spirit without limit He was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power.

Jesus is the Anointed One, the Messiah of Israel. There had never been anyone remotely like Him! No wonder that the New Testament speaks of the Spirit of Christ – the Messiah, the Anointed One.

2. The Spirit brings Christ to live in you.

The Messiah was also to be the giver of the Spirit. So John, who baptised people in water, pointed to Jesus and prophesied that He would baptise people with the Spirit, and Jesus promised the disciples he would send the Holy Spirit. (John 15v26; 16v7)

But Jesus also said, in the same breath, that that the coming of the Spirit would be Himself, returning to live in the disciples. He said, *“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you”*. (John 14v18) The Spirit is Jesus Himself living in us, “the Spirit of Christ”.

And our text draws a very important conclusion from this. **If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.** There are only two alternatives for you and me. We either belong to Christ or we don't. When you put your faith in Jesus, His Spirit comes to you. Jesus begins to live in you. “The Spirit of Christ” dwelling in us is the great evidence of us being Christ's.

There is nothing “airy-fairy” about this. As Michael Green puts it *“No longer is the Holy Spirit encountered as naked power; he is clothed with the personality and character of Jesus.”* (Green: ‘I Believe in the Holy Spirit’. Hodder & Stoughton 1975)

So when Christ lives in you, His character begins to shine through your character. That is what the fruit of the Spirit are all about. Galatians 5v22,23 describe the wonderful characteristics of Jesus, which His Spirit within us produces in us. Where there is no evidence of change in a person, then we should doubt that they are Christ's.

Many of you saw the recent edition of 'Songs of Praise' from the Castlegate in Newcastle, featuring our very own Alan and Susan and a former local gangster called Davey. His whole life and lifestyle has been utterly changed by Jesus coming to live within Him by the Spirit. Susan talked to a woman this week about the programme, and she turned out to have been a babysitter for Davey's kids in the bad old days. She hadn't seen the programme and could not believe he could possibly have changed. But he has, because Jesus lives in him now – by His Spirit.

Yet Christ is not only *in us* by His Spirit, but *we are in Christ!*

3. The Spirit places you into Christ.

What does this mean? It means there is a fundamental difference in your spiritual condition as soon as you become a Christian.

Before you became a Christian your condition was that of being dead in your sin. (Ephesians 2v2) Now that you have received the Spirit of Christ your condition has changed. You are "in Christ." You are no longer governed by sin; you are under a different government. Jesus referred to this as living in the Kingdom of God i.e. living under God's kingly rule. You can now say "Jesus is my Lord. He is in charge of my life". You are not at the beck and call of that terrible dictator called sin. You have been rescued from the dominion of darkness & transferred into the kingdom of God's beloved Son. (Colossians 1v13)

This has been made possible by the "Spirit of Christ". And Paul says that because you are under a new government there is now a new "law" at work in your life. It is not a law of rules and regulations. It is the law of the Spirit. *"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death."*(Romans 8v1, 2)

Imagine a man flapping by the side of the road insisting that he can fly. Someone explains that he is held down by the law of gravity, but he points to planes in the sky. Yes, but they are operating on a different law – the law of aerodynamics. That is why they can fly. So it is with you when the Spirit of Christ comes into your life. You are no longer under the law of sin and death. You are operating in a different realm, under the law of the Spirit of life.

In our old condition we were helpless slaves of sin. Now, when we sin, we are fools! We don't need to sin. We are no longer under its control. It has no power over us. You and I are in Christ. He is our Lord now. We can fly!

4. The Spirit's role is to glorify Christ.

Jesus said so. *"When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about*

me". (John 15v26) *"He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you."* (John 16v13f)

Jim Packer writes: *"I remember walking to a church one winter evening to preach on the words "he shall glorify me", seeing the building floodlit as I turned a corner, and realising that this was exactly the illustration my message needed. When floodlighting is well done, the floodlights are so placed that you do not see them; you are not in fact supposed to see where the light is coming from; what you are meant to see is just the building on which the floodlights are trained. The intended effect is to make it visible when otherwise it would not be seen for the darkness, and to maximize its dignity by throwing all its detail into relief so that you see it properly."* This illustrates the Spirit's ministry. He is *"the hidden floodlight shining on the saviour."* (J. I. Packer. 'Keep in Step with the Spirit' IVP. 1984)

One of the first indications of the Spirit in your life is a growing love for Jesus. The Spirit's preoccupation is to help you see the beauty and grace and glory of Christ. He is the hidden floodlight shining on the Saviour. You were not interested in Jesus before, but now you want to know Him. You used to want to please yourself, now you want to please Jesus. His name never passed your lips, now you want to worship Him. All this is the work of the Spirit, glorifying Christ.

This is also the mark of a Spirit-filled church. In our worship every contribution can be put to this test; and gifts of the Spirit too. Does this glorify Jesus? Does it honour His teaching, or cut across it? Does it bring people under condemnation or highlight Christ's grace? Does it exalt His name, or draw attention to someone else - like the one who is speaking? Does this build up Christ's church or undermine it?

Now, one final reason why the Spirit is "the Spirit of Christ".

5. The Spirit gives us power to be Christ's witnesses

"When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning." (John 15v26,27)

On the day of His resurrection Jesus breathed on the disciples and said *"Receive the Holy Spirit."* (John 20v22) I understand this is as the moment when the disciples were born again. This could not take place until after Jesus had died for their sins and been raised from the dead. For forty days therefore these men had a unique experience. They had received the Spirit of Christ, and yet Jesus with His resurrection body kept appearing to them.

Yet as He prepared to go back to the glory of heaven Jesus instructed those same disciples to expect even more of the Spirit's power. *"Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me*

Speak about. For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 1v4,5)

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Act 1v8) The Spirit of Christ is poured out so that we can be witnesses to Christ.

For the disciples this took place on the day of Pentecost and straight away we see the difference this makes as Peter preaches and three thousand people believe in Jesus and are baptised. (See Acts 2). Then Peter and John bring healing to a beggar who was crippled in the name of Jesus. (Acts 3v1-10) They are hauled before the same council who had condemned Jesus to death a few weeks earlier but they testify boldly of their faith in Jesus as the Messiah. (Acts 4). When they return to the other disciples and begin to pray "the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly." (Acts 4v 4v31)

Being filled with the Spirit was not a one off. The disciples needed to go on being filled with the power of Christ's Spirit in order to be Christ's witnesses.

And so do we! We have a mission in this County which is only possible by the power of the Spirit. But remember, the Spirit's power is given so that we might be witnesses to Jesus, and for Jesus.

John Wilthew. November 2006