

Jesus' Resurrection and Our Resurrection
Romans 8:9-11

Brenda and I met at a summer camp, King's Arrow Ranch, in Lumberton, Mississippi during the summer of 1981. Brenda had graduated from KU and I still had a year left at LSU. That Fall I convinced Brenda to visit me in Baton Rouge. She hadn't met any of my friends, so I figured it was the perfect opportunity to involve them in a prank on Brenda. For some reason I thought that would make Brenda like me more. Before I tell you what I did, don't judge me: I was only 22 years old.

Brenda was staying with some female friends of mine on the other side of town. The plan was for me to pick her up for supper at 7 p.m. On the way to pick up Brenda I dropped off my friend Jim Gauley at a nearby Mini Mart (convenience store). Jim was dressed up as a scary dude: knit hat on his head, sunglasses, fatigues, boots, and gloves without fingers. And he had a long, thin object wrapped in a towel.

After I picked up Brenda I told her I need to stop by the Mini Mart to get some gum. There was Jim sitting on the curb looking scary. I went in and bought some gum while Brenda waited in the car. As I was walking to my car, Jim said, "Hey are you going over by LSU?" Being honest and always helpful, I said, "Yes I am." "Can you give me a ride?" Much to Brenda's chagrin, I said, "Sure." I let Jim climb into the back back seat of my 2-door Honda Accord hatchback. Brenda was a little freaked out by all of this, especially since it looked like he had a gun rolled up in a towel.

During our ten-minute drive across Baton Rouge, Brenda made small-talk with this guy in the back seat. Jim told all sorts of lies about being a plumber and having a wife and kids. Finally I asked him, "Hey, what do you have in that towel?" He said, "I've some roses for a girl named Brenda!" That was pretty much the last prank I played on Brenda.

I tell you all of this to point out that it's possible for two people to experience the exact same circumstances very differently. The difference depends whether or not you know how things are going to turn out. Brenda was full of anxiety because she didn't know what was going to happen, and I was having the time of my life because I knew what was happening.

The New Testament repeatedly tells us how things are going to turn out for those who are "in Christ Jesus." Today's passage tells us that those who are in Christ will experience the same type of resurrection that Christ experienced. This knowledge is supposed to change everything for those who understand and believe it. It's not that we can skate through life without any worries or suffering. Rather, it means that we can face all the hardships of this life honestly (we don't have to deny them and pretend that they aren't as bad as they really are). And we can live our lives with confidence because we really do know how things are going to turn out. People who know (even in broad strokes) how things are going to turn out can even experience joy - true joy - in the midst of suffering.

Today we've come in our study of Romans to Romans 8:9-11. In this passage Paul assures believers that the Holy Spirit will guide them through this life and will raise them bodily from the dead in the next. As you know, it's one thing to make bold statements about the future (people are always predicting that things will happen in the future), but it's quite another to be right about those statements. Later in this message we'll talk about why we should believe that Paul's claims about our future resurrection really will come true.

In these verses Paul continues his contrast between two broad categories of people: those who are "in the Spirit" and those who are "in the flesh." This is Paul's shorthand for those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and those who aren't. As we talked about last week and as we'll see in this passage, when you put your faith in Jesus you are given the Holy Spirit. You now have the capacity to live by the Spirit. If you've never trusted Christ and been given the Holy Spirit, your only option is to live "according to the flesh." Paul has argued throughout Romans that this is the condition of every single person before Christ.

In verse 9 Paul turns his attention specifically toward his readers, the believers in Rome. He assures them with these words:

9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

Because he was convinced that his readers were genuine believers, Paul says emphatically "**you** are not in the flesh but in the Spirit" (he uses the personal pronoun "you" at the first of the sentence). He isn't trying to cast doubt on whether or not they were "in the Spirit" when he adds, "if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you." He is really just defining his terms: to be "in the Spirit" means that "the Spirit of God dwells in you." By definition, if the Spirit of God dwells within you, you are "in the Spirit" and therefore have the capacity to love God with everything you've got and to love your neighbor as yourself. As we mentioned last week, this doesn't mean that we do this perfectly, but we do have the capacity to walk by the Spirit.

In the second sentence, Paul states the converse of what he's just said: "If anyone does **not** have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him." This is one of many verses that leads to the conclusion that every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. When you put your faith in Christ, you are given the Holy Spirit.

Paul's imagery is rather elastic/flexible. He can speak both of the believer being "in the Spirit" and of the Spirit dwelling "in the believer." But in verse 10 Paul makes an interesting statement about our condition (and experience) in **this** life.

10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

Notice how he naturally moves from talking about “the Spirit of God dwell[ing] in you” (verse 9) to “Christ in you” in verse 10. Technically, the Holy Spirit is the person of the Godhead who dwells within the believer, but since He is also “the Spirit of Christ” and “the Spirit of God,” it’s also accurate to say that Christ and God also dwell within us.

When Paul says of the believer that “the body is dead because of sin,” he’s probably just restating what he’s said numerous times in Romans when he’s referred to our “mortal bodies.” In this life we live in bodies that are mortal, meaning that they are **subject to disease and decay and death**. This condition is the fallout from sin in the human race.

If Christ is in you, though the body is dead/mortal because of sin, “yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.” In this translation (NASB), “spirit” is lower-case and refers to the human spirit. Using this translation, Paul is saying that because the believer has been declared righteous, s/he is now alive in spirit. That is certainly true; the human spirit is enlivened when Christ dwells within you.

But the word Paul uses for “spirit” is the same word he uses in verses 9 and 11 for the Holy Spirit. Since they didn’t use capital letters in ancient Greek, it’s very probable Paul is speaking of the Holy Spirit here in verse 10. As well, the word translated “alive” is everywhere else in the NT translated “life.” With this understanding, Paul is saying that even though we live in bodies that are subject to death, we are indwelt by the Spirit which is life; the Spirit gives us a growing experience of life. This is certainly taught elsewhere also.

A powerful example of this teaching is found in John 7. There we read that Jesus promised this very experience of the Spirit giving us an inner experience of life.

37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 38 “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’ ” 39 But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

The Holy Spirit gives us an inexhaustible supply of life. If you are a believer this is something you should expect throughout your life (instead of expecting that you probably won’t have what you need to walk with God through this life).

In verse 11 Paul turns from talking about our present experience of the Spirit to our **future** experience with the Spirit. Here he talking about a bodily resurrection:

11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Notice that Paul describes the Spirit in yet another way: the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead. In numerous places Paul writes that God is the one who raised

Christ from the dead (Romans 4:24, 6:4, etc.; 1 Cor. 6:14, 15:15, etc.). Paul claims that God will do for us exactly what He did for Christ Jesus: God will raise us bodily from the dead. Since we were created as embodied beings, our salvation won't be complete until it extends even to our bodies. Paul assures us that since the Spirit of God has made His home within us, God will one day complete our salvation through that same Spirit.

This will happen when He “gives life to our mortal bodies.” These bodies that are subject to disease and death will be given life. In other places Paul writes that these mortal bodies will be transformed into immortal bodies. The NT uses the term “immortal” in a very distinct way. The Greeks talked about “the immortality of the soul,” but the Bible speaks of immortality as something that God gives to His people at the return of Christ. Immortality specifically refers to our bodies. In 1 Corinthians 15:53 Paul wrote that at the return of Christ, “this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.” Paul tells us here in Romans 8 that the same God who raised Christ from the dead will also raise us from the dead “through the Spirit who dwells in [us].”

Why should we believe this claim? Given that anybody can say anything about the future, why should we believe Paul's claim? Since this is a claim we can't test and prove, is it plausible? How do we even go about evaluating a promise like this?

A key observation is that Paul makes a connection between Jesus' ***past*** resurrection and our ***future*** resurrection. It seems to me that Paul's statements about our future resurrection are only as plausible as his statements about Jesus' past resurrection. Paul himself was very aware that everything he taught hinged on whether or not Jesus had been raised from the dead. That's why Easter is such a big deal.

It's been said that if you're a football fan, you've got the Super bowl. If you're a baseball fan, you've got the World Series. If you're a basketball fan, you've got the Final Four. If you're a Christian, you've got Easter. If you're a Christian and a basketball fan, this weekend (2015) is about as good as it gets. . . It is true that Easter is the biggest event of the year for Christians because the resurrection of Jesus Christ either makes or breaks Christianity. And the bodily resurrection of believers either rises or falls with the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

Listen to Paul's logic from 1 Corinthians 15.

12 Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; 14 and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.

The resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of those who are in Christ either rise or fall together. If Christ really wasn't raised from the dead, everything I teach about Christ week after week is worthless and everything you believe about Christ is worthless. A couple verses later we read:

16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; 17 and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

The message of Christianity is that a man named Jesus who lived in Israel 2000 years ago died on the cross for our sin and was bodily resurrected on the third day. Many people throughout history have been pronounced dead and then been resuscitated. But that's not what we're saying. Christianity claims that Jesus Christ died on a Friday, was put in a stone tomb, and then on the following Sunday morning He was raised bodily from the dead never to die again. His resurrection was God's stamp of approval on Jesus' life and upon His death as the sacrifice for our sins.

We won't take the time today to rehearse the historical evidence for the resurrection. But there is all sorts of evidence to consider if you are interested: the eyewitness accounts in the New Testament, extra-biblical testimonies of those who lived at the time of Christ, answers to various alternative theories about what really happened, etc. It won't surprise you to hear that I'm convinced that Jesus was raised bodily from the dead. The fact of His resurrection gives me confidence about my eventual resurrection.

That is the reason why Paul wrote in Romans 8:11:

11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

This means that we can walk through this life with confidence that our salvation will one day be complete. We really do know how things will end up for those who believe in Jesus.

It's been said that "if you live long enough you will suffer." You just will. Many of you here today are facing incredibly difficult circumstances with your health (mental or physical), strained or broken relationships, battles with the flesh, etc. This confidence in your eventual resurrection doesn't minimize or trivialize what you're going through; but it does put your suffering in its proper context.

I'm reading a book by J. Todd Billings entitled *Rejoicing in Lament, Wrestling with Incurable Cancer and Life in Christ*. Billings was diagnosed with multiple myeloma (blood cancer) in 2012; his book records his reflections on his physical condition in light of the promises in the Bible. In one chapter Billings talks about how congregations such as ours should be fellowships where we don't have to pretend that we'll never die; we can face the reality of death openly and honestly because of Paul's statement that "the last enemy to be destroyed is death." Billings writes this (p. 100):

For "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died" (1 Cor. 15:20). But Christ's victory over death is not grounds for us to pretend that we are not mortal, to push death and dying to the furthest corner of our minds. Rather,

our hope in Christ can give us courage to look members of our congregation in the face when we talk about our own death. By the Spirit we've been united as brothers and sisters in Christ's body, such that "if one member suffers, all suffer together with it" (12:26). We can walk the path of life and the path of dying as one path because they share one hope: that in "body and soul, in life and in death," we belong to our "faithful Savior, Jesus Christ" (Heidelberg Catechism Q & A 1).

As a body of believers, we can walk through this life together; we can help each other trust God in the midst of suffering. Instead of pulling away from God and others because our circumstances are tough, we walk together throughout this life. We are confident about the future because we are confident about the past: Jesus' past resurrection guarantees our future resurrection. Therefore we cling to God with everything we've got. Corrie Ten Boom said is well:

"When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the engineer." Corrie Ten Boom