

Introduction

Murray Capill: There is not one dimension of the Christian life that is not enabled by the work of the Spirit. Quite simply, without the Spirit there is no spiritual life. It is the Spirit who convicts us of sin, awakens our dead hearts to hear and see spiritual truths, draws us to Jesus as Saviour and Lord, unites us to him, works ongoing faith in our hearts, assures us of our adoption, seals us, sanctifies us, revives us, renews us, enables us with gifts to serve Christ, leads us, assures us, teaches us, prays for us and displays to us the magnificence of the gospel of Christ.¹

Table Exercise #1: Read Romans 8:5-8 and identify the distinctions Paul makes in this passage regarding the flesh and the Spirit.

Proposition: As we unpack these verses from Romans 8, we're going to consider these distinctions in order to help us more fully understand and appreciate the significance of the Spirit's work in those who have put their faith in Christ.

I. A vast distinction in identity (v.5)

David Garner: As Scripture uniformly presents, the Spirit graciously, effectively, and permanently gives us Christ Jesus and every blessing he has secured. Our salvation is *in* Christ alone. Our salvation is *by* his Spirit alone. To begin book three of the *Institutes*, Calvin affirms, the "Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself."¹ It must be so, for "as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us."² The Holy Spirit ministers across the ages—bringing Christ and his salvation to those living before and after his redemptive work.³ There is no salvation apart from the Father's election and the Son's humiliation and exaltation. True. Yet *no one* enjoys the benefits of Christ's saving life, death, and resurrection apart from the Holy Spirit. He is the vital bonding Agent, the glue of the gospel, securing sinners immediately and permanently to Christ Jesus.²

II. A vast distinction in mindset (v. 5)

John Owen: The mind is a leading faculty of the soul. When the mind fixes upon an object or course of action, the will and the affections (heart) follow suit. They are incapable of any other consideration... the mind's office is to guide, to direct, to choose and to lead.

Table Exercise #2: Review Galatians 5:19-24 and identify the things of the flesh versus the things of the Spirit. How and what does this help us to understand about the mindset of unbelievers versus the mindset of believers?

¹ <https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/christ-glorifying-spirit/>

² <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-holy-spirit-agent-of-salvation/>

Warren Wiersbe: The unsaved person does not have the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:9) and lives in the flesh and for the flesh. His mind is centered on the things that satisfy the flesh. But the Christian has the Spirit of God within and lives in an entirely new and different sphere. His mind is fixed on the things of the Spirit. This does not mean that the unsaved person never does anything good, or that the believer never does anything bad. It means that the bent of their lives is different. One lives for the flesh, the other lives for the Spirit.³

III. A vast distinction in condition and disposition (v. 6-7b)

Table Exercise #3: Read Ephesians 2:1-5 and 13-18 and answer the following questions: **1)** How do verses 1-3 help us to understand how the mind set on the flesh (i.e., the carnally minded) is *death* and *hostile toward God*? **2)** How do verses 4-5 and 13-18 help us to understand how the mind set on the Spirit (i.e., the spiritually minded) is *life and peace*? Feel free to bring up any other key verses you can think of.

IV. A vast distinction in ability (v. 7-8)

Conclusion

Application Question: How have these verses and this lesson helped me to understand and appreciate the significance of the Holy Spirit's work in my life? How does God want to affect the way that I think, my affections and desires, and how I live based on the truth I see in His Word?

³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 539.