

Session 3

June 19, 2022

INDWELT BY THE SPIRIT

Romans 8:9-17

Many years ago, while still in seminary, my wife and I arrived at Norfolk airport (VA) to find all flights cancelled because of an approaching hurricane. Clearly, it was going to be a long night. First, we managed to find a vacant payphone (remember those?) and rebooked our flights. Then, after wandering around the airport (it wasn't very big) and watching the wind-blown rain against the windows for a while, we grabbed some snacks and found a quiet corner to camp out. Before long, another couple arrived with the same idea. A friendly conversation ensued, and we found we had much in common. When he asked what I did, I explained that I was in seminary studying for ministry. He smiled broadly and said "I knew you guys were believers. My spirit bore witness to it. That's why God brought us together." In an airport filled with stranded strangers, we had found each other. And that long night didn't seem quite as long after all.

In this week's focal text, the apostle Paul explains how the Holy Spirit indwells, liberates, and affirms those who belong to Christ.

The Holy Spirit indwells (vv. 9-11). This declaration is made in contrast to that which came earlier in chapter 8, a description of those who *walk* according to the flesh (v. 4), *live* according to the flesh (v. 5), and *think* according to the flesh (v. 7). Verse 9 is rhetorical; obviously some in the Roman community must have exhibited carnal behaviors. But Paul pointed out that true believers *could not continue* to live in the flesh. Why? Because the Spirit of God indwells us. Notice three unique roles of the Holy Spirit in succession: the Spirit of God first *identifies* the believer as belonging to Christ (v. 9); then *animates* the believer with spiritual vitality (v. 10); and will ultimately *resurrect* the believer in eternity. For reflection: *Read 1 Cor. 3:1-4. What role does the word of God play in this topic? How do you think the Holy Spirit relates to the word?*

The Holy Spirit liberates (vv. 12-15). In these verses, Paul continued his use of contrasts to make his points. Notice how many there are: *live* vs. *die*; *Spirit* vs. *flesh*; *spirit of slavery* vs. *spirit of adoption*; *fear* vs. "Abba Father." The overall theme is liberation. As believers, we are no longer "obligated" to live, act, or think according to the flesh. The word "obligated" here refers to *ownership*. Since we are no longer "owned" by the old sin nature, we need not obey its lusts (see Rom. 6:12). This never means that believers are free to do what they *want*. Rather, they are free to do what they *ought*! Verse 14 addresses the relationship between believers and God. We are not simply His possessions; we are part of His *family* (see John 1:12). The doctrine of adoption is rich in its tradition. First there is God's *sovereignty*: children do not choose their adoptive parents, but parents choose their children. Second there is *priority*. Roman law gave special privileges to adopted children that in many ways surpassed those of blood-born children. Third, there is *intimacy*. In all three passages of Scripture where this word is found, it is always joined to the word Father. Together they imply a special familial affection. For reflection: *While the phrase "Abba Father" does imply a fatherly affection, I still cringe when someone suggests this title really means we can refer to God as "Daddy." Where do you think we need to draw the line between intimacy and reverence?*

The Holy Spirit affirms (vv. 16-17). Not only does the indwelling Holy Spirit identify the believer as genuinely saved to others, but His presence also bears witness to the believer himself that he is saved. Hence, the assurance of salvation is not only something tangible and outward like good works (James 2:18) or spiritual fruit (Gal. 5:22) that result from the new birth, but also something inward, intangible, and intensely spiritual: God's Holy Spirit communicates directly with our human spirits, continually reminding us and assuring us inwardly that we belong to Him. For reflection: *Review the story I told in the introduction. Have you ever experienced something similar? How do you feel when something like that does happen?*