

“If Ye Have Not Christ”  
 Sam Richards  
 Sermon for 2 November 2025  
 Text: Romans 8:5-11

The argument: first, we establish your position (you are not in the flesh, but you are in Christ—you belong to him and not to the world); second, only those who are in Christ possess the Spirit, and are recipients of the spiritual fruit as well as select spiritual gifts); third, if you are in Christ, you possess His righteousness and shall have eternal life and fourth, if you are not of Christ, nothing you do counts for anything and you shall surely perish—along with pagans, heathen worldliness and unbelievers.

Details, details. The officer noticed the undressed feet of an elderly man sitting on a street bench. So he asked his sergeant to stop, “Pull over,” he said. He put his hat on and approached the older man, “Sir, is everything alright?” “Splendid” was the reply. However, everything was not splendid. The elderly man did not know where he was, or where he was headed. He didn’t even know his surname when asked! The officer asked for some identification and helped the gentleman fish out his wallet. He asked the sergeant to access the missing persons bulletins and, sure enough, the gentleman on the bench had been reported as missing earlier in the day, all happily resolved because the officer notices someone’s undressed feet—one slipper and one untied shoe. Details. I was reflecting on some of the saints I have known: Pierson Harris, Wilbur Green, Ernie Denman, Dick Durost, Earnest Fieldhouse, Sam Martin of Sandwich, England and two anonymous Dutchmen.

Of the latter, I wish to note they were two Christian brothers who paid it forward by befriending this Christian brother at critical moments on his life adventure.

One was the hospitality steward at the international airport in Amsterdam where Lynne and I had waited for hours in the wrong line and missed our transatlantic flight home. I know that he was Christian because I was a stranger and he took me in. He took us to his home and introduced us to his Christian friends and family and we fellowshiped around a home bible study before being returned to the airport to board our flight home! The other brother was a World War Two veteran, who was wounded defending Holland against the invading Germans. By the grace of God there was in the trenches a Christian soldier who saw the Dutchman collapse on the active battlefield. As he prayed for the fallen soldier, the Lord prompted him to go forth and rescue the man. He stifled the prompt at first. His commanding officer refused to permit him to attempt the rescue. But the praying soldier kept hearing the urgent command; “Go, rescue that soldier.” So he returned to the sergeant, “The Lord keeps telling me to attempt a rescue.” The sergeant replied, “What are you waiting for. Obey your commanding officer.”

And that is how I ended up being befriended by another brother, who twenty plus years after the war was still paying it forward. He took me home, fed and gave me drink. The details matter. It matters that they were Christians and they were ministering to a Christian brother because what they did unto me, they did unto the Lord. I am positive they are in heaven, they are sheep, and they have their reward. It’s all in the details. They were **Spirit walking**, righteous, faithful and obedient servants of the Most High God. Just **Christians being Christians!** O Lord that we would get over ourselves, O that we would surmount our circumstances, transcend the narrow boundaries of the moment, the here and now and live in the kingdom as the brothers and sisters we are—and ever shall be!

Now hear the word of the Lord from Romans 8:

**Romans 8:9 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. 10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is [life] alive because of righteousness. 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 [because] through His Spirit who dwells in you.**

There was a time when I knew God not personally—if God existed, his existence was outside my experience. Then God visited me and I became real—yes, I found my real identity in Him, I woke from my slumber and became alive. Declaring Himself to be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. **I am the Lord**, he said. Now as I have related this encounter before, I wish to repeat that my first reaction **to this spiritually awkward and disruptive occurrence** was to imagine myself insane.

Here I was conversing with God, someone whose very existence I had adamantly denied . . . until I couldn't. He enveloped me in a sense of His glorious presence (“the whole room was aglow with His light!”), and His tender love. In that startling but consoling irrecoverable atmosphere, God spoke three truths to me cancelling three curses—curses so deeply buried in my soul, or psyche, that I strongly repressed them and hid them from everyone. These curses were too painful, to real, and too terribly excruciating to be admitted outside the privacy of my own being—too private that is until God forthrightly, and saving-ly, brought them into the open. Who knew these deep things, but God? He is the only one who needs no permission to show up, to reveal the truth, to confront lies and to cancel heart-hardening curses—oppressive spiritual chains. So, of course, I lived as unloved, unwanted and guilty for stuff I had no responsibility for at all—no child causes their parents to divorce, the street and cost of childrearing beside the point. You and I both know these curses are not just my personal concern—many of you have your history of cancellation and deliverance to share.

So what then? Technically, this *God encounter*, for all that it is worth to me, and the divine preparation of men who would later rescue is not the subject of Romans 8. It doesn't address my liberation from the flesh—something that did not happen instantaneously, but rather gradually over time. **You are not in the flesh** could not be declared over me as I was not yet **in the Spirit**. **And I was not yet in the Spirit purely and simply because I did not yet have the Spirit of Christ**. I was shall we say, half-dead—or I was spiritually quickened but not fully charged up. Of course, that is just a metaphor for my pre-Christian state. Yes, I was a God-fearer. No, I was not fully converted. I was an “almost Christian.” Christ entered my heart some five years after my God encounter. And that is when I received the Holy Spirit, the moment I first believed and this the universal experience of Christians confirms. This is the thing that transforms the “almost Christian” into the “altogether Christian” whom Christ died to alter, liberate and set free. If you have not Christ, you are not free. For if you have not Christ, you have not the Spirit! Hear me, and if not me, hear Paul: **If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ** (indwelling him!) **He does not belong to Him**. And that means at least two things: either you are half-dead now—or, not fully alive now!—and so, unhappily, you are damned as well. It's in the details.

Now hear the word of the Lord from Matthew 25:

Yes, you heard me correctly. Doubtful about perdition? Allow me to bring to your recollection Matthew 25:41-46:

**41 “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; 42 for I was hungry, and you gave Me *nothing* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; 43 I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ 44 Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not [a]take care of You?’ 45 Then He will answer them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ 46 These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”**

Isn't it unsettling that the Lord, these are the red letter verses(!) frames this clear pronouncement in terms of perdition? Note: **Eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels** and, then, **eternal punishment**? Who is **one of the least of these**? Jesus is referring to us, His brothers and sisters in the Spirit, His co-heirs. Feeding the hungry is fine; feeding our brothers and sisters is better—only the latter gets us into heaven! How we need to **love one another**. Compassion for the starving is one thing, insuring that our spiritual family, our brothers and sisters have enough to eat is, however, a priority. It is most certainly not an excise to neglect either the world, or the church. Yes, remembering the poor is our Christian duty—but duty starts closer to home.

***Also, pay attention, the matter at hand is in fact “the social gospel” that many so-called liberal Christians espouse as the be all and end all of true Christianity—and of those think they are justified by feeding the hungry indiscriminately, giving drink to the thirsty marathoners, or street people, showing hospitality, visiting those incarcerated (especially brothers and sisters wretchedly imprisoned/persecuted for their faith?)—and clothing the naked (not mentioned here, but it is a very common social gospel outreach for churches and often not free clothing, but re-sold items). When I say, “justified,” I mean some imagine that they will get into heaven because of these good works (or through foreign and home missions) while they neglect their “brothers and sisters.” Remember the injunction, **He that cares/provides not for his own family is worse than an unbeliever.** (1 Timothy 5:8) Not so among us!***

I am suggesting these “ministries” are things we ought to support and to do. They are, but not to the neglect our home base. Jesus' point is that no one is judged just for what they did do—no, we are also judged for what we don't do (**nothing to eat?, nothing to drink?**). And because there are still the hungry, the sick, the thirsty, the impoverished(!) etc. inside the church and in the world, we have not accomplished the goal of our “missions,”-we are so far from 100%. What condemns us is our manifest failure—what we didn't even try to do for our brothers and sisters! **No wonder we are advised to cry out, “Lord, have mercy . . . rather than, Lord, look at all I've done!**— we simply cannot justify ourselves. *We can never do enough, and, just maybe, that is how it is meant to be—it is a spiritual necessity for either we do this ministry and enter eternal life/the kingdom prepared for us.* Self-righteousness proves a dead end street. You see, all these ministries, food, water, clothing, they minister to the flesh, leaving the soul famished apart from Christ, the word of salvation. Make your fundamental mission, after **loving one another**, that of proclaiming Christ and promoting liberty and life as well as ministering to the physical needs of humanity! Heed the word of the Lord in Luke 17:9-10:

**9 He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? 10 So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done *only* that which we ought to have done.'**"

And lest we think it unbecoming to be called **slaves**, we should consider how Paul and Silas were so designated during their mission to Philippi:

**17 Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you [a]the way of salvation."**

And for those nervous about the testimony of a slave girl beset with a spirit of divination being accurate or sound, here is Paul's own self-designation from Romans 1:1 as confirmation: **Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.** We are all called to be servants of the Lord! ***And if Christ be in you, that is who you are.***

Well, is He in you? Are you walking in the Spirit? Are the fruit—note especially **goodness** and **faithfulness**—evident, prevailing, or present in your life experience, your history, your practice?

How would you explain the absence of this promised fruit in your life?

And do you know what to do about it? Yes, turn to Christ, fly to Jesus . . . beg God to increase your faith and magnify your goodness so that all you do has purpose, eternal significance and meaning. Jesus alone can make it count. Remember, Jesus once declared, **Apart from Me, ye can nothing do.** Now the same condition pertains to the operation of the Holy Spirit in any, and all believers' lives! Indeed, we can go further and declare that it is all of the Father who is working His goodwill in and through us—to His greater glory, and our great good.

**Amen.**