

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit



**January 2017 Sermons by
Pastor Kevin Redig
to Help us Understand
and Apply Ephesians 1:19**

Foreword

To try and understand the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is a little bit like trying to simultaneously know the unknowable and exhaust the inexhaustible. For this reason it seems presumptuous to write a little booklet about it, as if the subject could be covered in such a finite way.

So how about if I just tell you instead that I am so intrigued by the promise of Ephesians 1:19, that I think we simply must connect it with our understanding of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. By doing so, I trust we will be *built up in the faith* that little bit more, and thereby manifest more of His power in our lives to the glory of God.



And as always, my ongoing appreciation to the saints of VCC for their receptivity to the preaching of God's Word.

In His grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Redig'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Kevin Redig—Jan 2017

All Scripture quotes have been taken from either the NKJV (1992 edition) or the NIV (1984 edition).

Published May, 2017

Part 1

Understanding the Holy Spirit's Role in Enabling the Believer

In the middle of the first chapter of the book of Ephesians, beginning in Verse 15, Paul gives us a glimpse into his prayer life. Apparently the content of this particular praying was important enough that God preserved it within His Word down through the centuries. First, let's ask, "For whom was Paul praying?" The short answer is that he was praying for believers in the Lord Jesus Christ—saved individuals, those who had responded in faith to the Gospel message! We know this, because Paul included it right in the context. He is writing to a group who: **heard the word of truth**, specifically the Gospel, and then placed their trust in what they heard. (Ephesians 1:13) Furthermore, they were marked as belonging to God through the sealing ministry of the Holy Spirit. What prompted this to occur? Again, belief in what they heard!

You see before we dig any deeper into the Christian life, we must be Biblically clear on how one enters it—*faith alone in Christ alone*. For Christ is the sole object of the Gospel message, and faith is the sole means by which we receive the salvation which God has so graciously supplied through the work of His Son. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

So having settled the question of the objects of Paul's prayers, we can also ask, "What was the content of his prayer?" In other words, what was he praying about? The answer to that is a little bit more involved, but equally clear in the text. He wanted the believers to whom he had ministered to know something—really three things. Furthermore, this knowledge was so spectacular in nature, that the only way this group of believers could grasp it, is if they had a great spiritual enlightenment.

Paul is afraid of ignorance on the part of these believers, as we all should be, and so he is deeply in prayer for them. He knows they would need their eyes opened wide—spiritually speaking—for no one could have expected these three aspects of God's plan for the believer, they are that spiritually spectacular. What are they? He wants believers to know, with absolute certainty:

1. The hope, or expectation, of His calling. This hope is our confidence that God is at work transforming us to the image of His Son. (Romans 8:29)
2. The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. This inheritance includes a share in the very glory of God as we are transformed into the likeness of His Son. (II Corinthians 3:18)
3. The exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe. It is this short little phrase that has really caught my attention and is the subject of this booklet.

...that you may know. . .what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe. . .

Ephesians 1:19



You see the grandness of the language and the scope of these three promises is breathtaking. However, as one whose calling it is to unfold the content of Scripture to those willing to listen, I am particularly concerned that we might move right past Verse 19 saying, "Wow, that's such a great promise!" without really coming to grips with the depth of what's there.

I think I can easily show you what I mean. For example, to what exactly is this scripture referring when it talks about an *exceeding great power*? How many of you would say, "Yes, this verse is descriptive of me? For I see *the exceeding greatness of His power* is at work in my life on a daily basis!" I suspect many of us believe that God has provided such a power, but, at the same time, would admit that we are not really experiencing it.

If we move on from this passage without understanding the fullness of what is there, and without realizing that every Christian is meant to know this power from God in a personal way, then we are in grave danger. We are in danger of thinking that the Bible describes the life of the Christian in terms that are exaggerated, and we just need to get used to the fact that the real Christian life is to be lived at a lower plane of existence.

Perhaps we might even develop a Christian cynicism that see the Biblical descriptions of the victorious Christian life as no more than a *glamour photo*—similar to the photo on a magazine cover. In other words the picture looks perfect in print, but in reality all the imperfections have been removed in order to present a perfect image that isn't real! Is that what's going on here in Ephesians 1:19? **Absolutely not!** Wouldn't that be an acknowledgment that Christianity is just another form of hypocrisy? Or consider it this way, if we have come to the point that we don't think God can really accomplish in His people what He says He can, isn't that just a manifestation of unbelief?

We absolutely need to avoid the temptation to view any Biblical description of the Christian life as anything but truth! Let me show you something:

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature. . .II Peter 1:3-4

Do you see it? He has given us “everything we need for life and godliness,” and the source is “His divine power!” Both the outcome (godliness) and the provision (everything we need) are very clearly stated. These statements are in no way, shape, or form meant to be exaggeration or to do anything other than prompt dependent faith. Now I know some of you are thinking, “But you don’t know the kind of struggles I have. . .!” Maybe not, but I do know:

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. I Corinthians 10:13

Now obviously I am not implying that every Christian lives a power-filled and victorious life. In fact, I would be the first to acknowledge that the Bible seems to paint a picture of the Christian life that does not seem to be the actual experience of most Christians. However, the question I am wanting you to answer is this: “Is that because something is wrong with the plan of God?” In other words, is Christianity a *bait and switch*, something that initially has great appeal, but in reality doesn’t deliver on its promises? Let me declare it as emphatically as I can, there is absolutely nothing wrong on God’s end!

And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 4:19

Couple that with:

*Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind;
for He is not a man that He should change His mind.*

I Samuel 15:29

Instead of failure on God's part, the reason why so many do not experience what God has promised, and specifically why the exceeding greatness of His power is not evident in our lives, can be traced back to a failure on our part. It is our failure to know the promises of God, a failure to appropriate by faith what we do know, and a failure to rest in the capability of God rather than depending upon our own efforts. You see, as always, there is *God's way* and then every other approach, which can collectively be called *man's ways*. And, the promises of God are not fulfilled apart from doing things God's way!

This is a very hard lesson to learn, but it is necessary for progress in the Christian life. For example, just as there is no salvation for any of us apart from His way of faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, so neither is there spirituality apart from His way. We can try our mightiest, dedicate ourselves over and over, even have the most sincere and purest of motives. But, if we are not living the Christian life God's way, the power of God is not going to be manifest in our lives. It is that simple!



This is the reason we need to gather together and place ourselves under the authority of God's Word—me first in my study to prepare the message and then those who gather to hear that message taught. Then, of course, we need to add to that our own time of devotionals as the Holy Spirit, our teacher, reveals truth from God's Word to each of us. All this is so that we can *know* God's ways.

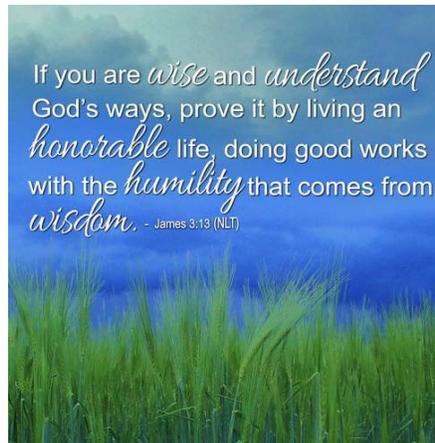
We have applied Isaiah 55 so many times to drive this point home:

"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

Isaiah 55:8-9

So our choices are pretty simple: we can learn God's ways or go without; we can cover-up and fake it or learn God's ways. When I spell it out this way, its pretty easy to decide isn't it? So let's turn back to Ephesians 1:19 in an effort to extract and understand *God's ways!*

As we have seen, this verse firmly declares the potential of having the exceeding greatness of His power at work in the life of those who believe. Then it goes on to tell us that this is the very same power—in capability and extent—that raised Christ from the dead. Do you see the importance of this? Why, if we had this power functioning within our lives, we would have victory over sin, over destructive habits, and over those aspects of our personality that create problems.



If we had this power at work within us, we might actually undergo lasting transformation! We might even become bold witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

If you are thinking, regarding any of the above, that this could never happen, then let that be your test. The one thing you think will never change or you could never do, when it happens, you will have no choice but to acknowledge it was the exceeding greatness of the power of God that accomplished it. And when you acknowledge that it was God Who accomplished such a thing, that will bring glory to Him.

So with that somewhat lengthy introduction, it is time to start digging into the details. What exactly is this exceeding great power for those who believe? How do we get it? Or perhaps a better question is, what do we need to do so that it becomes functional in our lives? We'll take it one step at a time.

Understanding the Exceeding Greatness of His Power Toward Us Who Believe

Let me make three points:

1. This power is that which, in the plan of God, is made available in the person of the Holy Spirit.

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. Romans 8:11

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. . ." Acts 1:8

I gave you two Scriptures to consider so that, first, you could see the Spirit's connection to the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Then, second, see the Spirit as the source of power for the followers of the resurrected Christ.

The power that raised Jesus, and the power that would come upon His followers at the beginning of the Church is one and the same—the Holy Spirit.

2. The Spirit of God has always been the distinct means by which God enables His people and allows them to accomplish His purposes. Let me give you two examples:

- In I Kings 19, Elijah has just been used by God to lead a great spiritual awakening within the Northern Kingdom of Israel. As a result, his life is threatened by those interested in maintaining the pagan status quo. He loses his spiritual perspective and flees for his life, even reaching the point where he says,

I have had enough, Lord. . . Take my life. . .

I Kings 19:4

I can tell you one thing with absolute certainty—when we start to try and live the Christian life in our own power, all of us will reach the point where we have had enough and can go no further. But the Lord has a lesson in store for Elijah. The Lord brings Elijah to a place where He can reveal Himself to him.

You should read the passage in its entirety, but here is a summary. Elijah observes a powerful wind that shatters the very rocks of the mountain, but the text is careful to say,

...but the Lord was not in the wind.

Then Elijah observes an earthquake, but again,

...the Lord was not in the earthquake.

Thirdly, there is a fire,

...but the Lord was not in the fire.

I don't know what the Lord would have shown a modern day Elijah, but I suspect it would have been something like the great armies of man, the technological prowess of man, and the great economic production of man. But in every case the result would have been the same, the Lord was not in those things! And then the Lord came to Elijah in I Kings 19:12 as a "**still small voice.**"



Not small as in ineffectual, but small in contrast to the things that grab the attention of man. For this is the Voice that called the material universe into being and commanded it to stand firm (Psalm 33:9). This is the same Voice that will one day speak the annihilation of all those arrayed against Jesus Christ at His Second Coming. Consider the further development of this very idea from Zechariah.

- The book of Zechariah contains the difficulties faced by Zerubbabel in the post-exilic rebuilding of the temple. Carefully consider this Word from the Lord to him:

This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the Lord of hosts. Zechariah 4:6

Do you see God presenting the same lesson to Zechariah as He did to Elijah? The power for the people of God is not found in the places where lost mankind would look; but rather, it is to be found in the Spirit of God! So it should be no surprise that Paul wants Church-age believers to know:

*...the exceeding greatness of His power
toward us who believe.*

3. How do we get the Spirit of God or, more appropriately, who has the Spirit of God? There are a variety of answers to this question. However, I think the Bible is very clear on this subject. The answer is this: every child of God has the Holy Spirit! If you have placed your faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, then you have received the Spirit. Let me show you how specific the Scriptures are on this matter from two different and complementary perspectives.
 - **The disciples.** You may never have considered the start of the Church in Acts Chapters 1 and 2 with respect to the pouring out of the Spirit on all believers, but I think you will see it speaks decisively on this subject. (I suggest reviewing both chapters.) In Acts 1:8, the disciples are told to wait for the outpouring of the Spirit before taking up their ministry of bearing witness to the risen Christ. On the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured out upon the Apostles and empowered them, many were amazed. But, as always, the voice of unbelief tried to dismiss the supernatural, explaining away the manifestation of the Spirit as the effects of alcohol. (Acts 2:13) Peter jumps on this immediately and makes it plain that what the people are seeing has exactly the same explanation as what was prophesied by Joel—the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:15-21)



And then after boldly proclaiming all that pointed to Jesus as Messiah, Peter closes this great first message at the dawn of the church with these words:

Exalted to the right hand of God, He has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. . .

Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. Acts 2:33, 36

There are two things here we must be absolutely certain we don't overlook. First, has Jesus been exalted to the right hand of God? "Of course!" you answer, "for that is fundamental to our faith." Then it is equally certain the Holy Spirit has been outpoured on those who believe! For that is what Verse 33 states as clearly as it is possible to do so. The exaltation of Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit are inexorably linked together. And not only that, but the outpouring of the Spirit is a promise, not just on Pentecost and not just for the Jew, but it is a promise for all who will believe down through the ages.

*Repent and be baptized every one of you
in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ
for the forgiveness of sins. And you will
receive the promise of the Holy Spirit.
The promise is for you and your children
and for all who are far off—
for all whom the Lord our God will call.*

Acts 2:38-39

The second thing we need to note is that Peter is declaring that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is what proves that Jesus is both Lord and Christ (Messiah). For the manifestation of the Holy Spirit has always been the proof that God is at work.

- **Carnal Christians.** Consider this second example of the Biblical truth that all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ have been given the Holy Spirit.

*Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins
a man commits are outside his body, but he
who sins sexually sins against his own body.
Do you not know that your body is a temple
of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you
have received from God? You are not your own;
you were bought at a price. Therefore honor
God with your body. 1 Corinthians 6:18-20*

This is just one of quite a few passages throughout the book that makes it clear the Christians within the Corinthian Church struggled with carnality. In the context, the admonition is almost certainly telling these Christians to stop engaging in sexual immorality with the temple prostitutes in Corinth. Look carefully at the way Paul frames his argument. He is dogmatically saying it would be wrong to do this because the Christian's body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit indwells the believer, and sexual immorality is a sin against the body.

In other words, Paul is not arguing that you lose the Spirit when you head to the pagan temple to engage in immorality; rather, he is arguing that it is particularly loathsome because you are taking the indwelling Spirit somewhere totally inappropriate! That's why Paul says:

*You are not your own; you were bought at a price.
Therefore honor God with your body...*



Honor God with the very body that is a temple of the Holy Spirit. If ever there were a group of Christians that would not meet the criteria to be indwelt by the Spirit, it would have been those carnal Corinthians. But the very basis of Paul's admonition is that they should stop their carnal behavior for the very reason that they are indwelt by the Spirit. In short, if the Corinthians Christians have the Spirit, so do all Christians.

Are you seeing how this connects back to our efforts to understand the power of God for those who believe? The problem for us as Christians is not one of not having the Spirit. Rather, it is one of not having the power of the Spirit at work in our lives. You see there are really two things at issue here. The first is a relationship with the Spirit through faith in Christ which leads to the indwelling of the Spirit. The other is the manifestation of His power in our lives that we might walk worthy of the calling that is ours as Christians.

You see it is quite possible to be a Christian and to not know this power, which really means to squander what God has provided.



But, to know this power is the secret of how God takes everyday people and accomplishes great things. For God has made available to us the very same Spirit that was found in

Moses, the meekest man on earth and yet a mighty prophet of God. It is the same Spirit that allowed David to be such a heroic figure and a man after God's own heart. It is this same Spirit that enabled Elijah to face down the 400 prophets of Baal. It is the very same Spirit of power that raised Jesus from the dead!

This Spirit is available for every believer in Jesus Christ during the age of the Church and that's the time in which you and I live! So when it says we have been given "*every spiritual blessing in Christ*," the outpouring of the Spirit is one of those spiritual blessings! Why would we ever leave such grace untouched? Perish the thought that, through either ignorance or apathy, we would not know the power of the Spirit in our lives.

So to better understand this power that is available to us, let us continue our study by beginning another line of investigation.

How Is It That We Can Know, In Experience, This Exceedingly Great Power?

Let me introduce you to the “filling of the Holy Spirit.” For it is very important for us to understand that, although all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are indwelt with the Holy Spirit, not all are filled with the Spirit. Or, to say it in a way that should avoid confusion, not all Christians are “walking in the Spirit.” It might help to further our understanding of this concept to consider this distinction as laid out by theologian Lewis Sperry Chafer:

A Christian is a Christian because he is rightly related to CHRIST; but "he that is spiritual" is spiritual because he is rightly related to the Spirit, in addition to his relation to CHRIST in salvation.

Do you see what He is saying? Faith in Christ is what brings us into the family of God. But this simple act of faith does not, by itself, mean that we automatically live as spiritual Christians. The entire book of I Corinthians is organized around the Apostle Paul trying to persuade the carnal Corinthians to start behaving in a way appropriate for people, who were called out of pagan idolatry, to be spiritual! So then, what Dr. Chafer is saying is that the spiritual Christian is the one who is not only rightly related to Christ through faith, but also lives a life rightly related to the Holy Spirit. We know that is not the case when sin is evident, as it was with the Corinthians.

Now that begs a very important question, how is it that the Christian becomes rightly related to the Spirit? Consider two passages of Scripture:

And do not be drunk with wine. . .but be filled with the Spirit. . . Ephesians 5:18

walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. Galatians 5:16

There are two important things we can glean from these two passages:

- The context makes it clear that the audience in both cases is the believer. The unbeliever is never told to be rightly related to the Spirit, but rather rightly related to God through the work of the Son!
- Both of these passages are encouraging the believer to make the right choice between one of two options. The Ephesians passage commands believers to choose the filling of the Spirit rather than the controlling effects of alcohol. The passage in Galatians admonishes believers to choose to walk in the Spirit rather than to live a life dominated by the desires of the flesh. It must be recognized that both negative options are a possibility for the child of God. The thrust of these two Scriptures is to caution every follower of Jesus Christ to avoid these failures of the Christian life.

So God's intent is very clear. He wants us to be filled with, and walk by, the Spirit because that is both where the power is as well as ultimately the means to experiential victory. When the Christian comes under the influence of alcohol (or anything other than the Spirit), or lives a life dominated by the sinful nature, then you can count on it—there will be little or no power in that life.

Understanding the Relationship

At this point it may be helpful to look at the relationship between the *filling* of the Spirit and *walking* in or by the Spirit. Are these options synonymous, or is there some degree of difference? First, let's consider the key verb in both Ephesians 5:18 and Galatians 5:16. The Greek word translated "filled" means to fill to the fullest, to make up a deficiency, to abound. In short, although every believer is indwelt by the Spirit, not all have the manifestation of the Spirit's power in their lives. Ephesians 5:18 is a command to continue on from the indwelling of the Spirit to a Christian life in which the power of the Spirit is functional.

The Greek word translated “walk” is one of my favorites. It is a compound word consisting of a word meaning “to walk” coupled with a prefix meaning about or around. Think of a guard patrolling the perimeter of the camp. So then, this word means so much more than to simply put one foot in front of the other. Instead, it refers to the life that is *carved out* or defined by the steps we take each and every day. So what Paul is telling us to do is to make sure to be filled with the Spirit from the moment we get up in the morning until we go to bed at night, wherever life leads us.

Perhaps you have discerned that although the filling of the Spirit and the walk of the Spirit are related, they are not exactly the same. This may help you grasp the relationship between the two:

- **The filling of the Spirit** addresses an individual’s status at any given moment. For at any point in time, Christians are either filled with the Spirit or they are not! And if we are not, then we are carnal—open to the influences of this world.



- **To walk by the Spirit** is to perpetuate the filling of the Spirit in time.

Filling and walking are really two sides of the same coin. A command to be filled by the Spirit, followed by an admonition to perpetuate that filling—to keep it going throughout the circumstances faced every moment of the day. So, at the risk of repetition, it is essential we understand the filling of the Spirit before we can even think about perpetuating it. Perhaps these quotes provide additional insight:

To walk in the Spirit “means to live each moment dependent on the Holy Spirit, sensitive to His voice, and obedient to Him.” Unknown Source

To walk in or by the Spirit is to allow Him to direct the way in which you live your life; it is to make decisions in the light of His holiness; it is to remain in communion with Him; it is to be occupied with the person of Christ, because the Spirit's ministry is to engage us "intimately" with the Lord Jesus. Carefully note – walking by the Spirit is not a mystical, trance-like state in which the believer enters and mysteriously lives; nor is it some kind of far out, ethereal experience as some have postulated – any such thinking along those lines is completely "cultic" in its orientation. To walk by the Spirit is to live under the direction of the Holy Spirit and to walk by faith in God's Word. D. Ekstrand

This is my definition of what it means to "walk in the Spirit" developed during our study of I Corinthians:

To walk (live) in the Spirit is to moment-by-moment maintain the filling of the Spirit, through the influence of both the indwelling Holy Spirit and indwelling Word of God, that the life of Christ might be manifest in us, as we navigate life's daily demands.

Perhaps this paraphrase of something I learned some time ago from the writings of Watchman Nee will help you put this discussion into perspective:

Christ's work on the cross is the work that procures salvation for us, the Spirit is the means by which that salvation is produced in us.



Losing and Regaining the Filling of the Spirit

Our discussion naturally brings us to the issue of losing the filling of the Spirit! And, if it can be lost, is it possible to be filled again? Let me start by making it clear that we are not talking about losing either our salvation or the indwelling of the Spirit. I Corinthians 6:19 has already settled that issue for us. You cannot lose either one.

But, can you lose the filling of the Spirit? Of course you can! The two passages we have already looked at make that abundantly clear. Being drunk or giving into the lusts of the flesh is the antithesis of the filling of the Spirit. If you are one, you are not the other. They are mutually exclusive. In summary, any time you sin you have lost the filling of the Spirit. That is the reason for the admonition in Ephesians 4:30:

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Sin grieves the Spirit, and, when we do so, His enabling power will no longer be at work in lives. A further consideration is that, in the same way we are told to perpetuate the filling of the Spirit, we are warned against the quenching of the Spirit in I Thessalonians 5:19:

Do not quench the Spirit.

I believe the path from the grieving of the Spirit to the quenching of the Spirit is taken by allowing sin to go on unchecked in the life of the believer without repentance or confession. This will cause the convicting voice of the Spirit to become more and more difficult to hear because we are building up "scar tissue" in our souls. (Ephesians 4:18). It is imperative we keep this from happening at all costs!

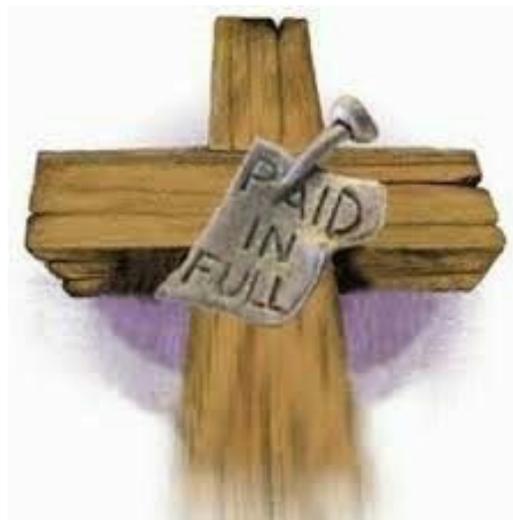
How do we keep it from happening, and how do we recover when we sin (grieve) the Holy Spirit? Good questions, and as always, God provides the answers in grace. If the filling of the Spirit is contrasted against sin, then we need simply ask, "What does the Bible say we should do, as Christians, when we sin?" Why, of course, we are to confess that sin. We are to name before God our thought, word, or deed for what it is, a transgression against the holiness of God. If we do this, then the outcome is stated in I John 1:9:

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Why does God do this? He does this because those sins were already poured out on Christ and judged at the cross. Our confession allows God to restore us to fellowship with Himself by applying the finished work of the cross to the confessed sins. If we are both forgiven and cleansed, then we

can trust that we have regained the filling of the Spirit. Sin in the life of the Christian can naturally lead to guilt, discouragement, and a host of other things that in essence cause the Christian life to stall. The question for each one of us is this: which looms

larger in my thinking, my sin or the finished work of the cross? Stated that way, you know the answer! We don't need another sacrifice for sins. When we fail, we need simply to rest in the sufficiency of the cross!



Closing Part 1

Let me close Part 1 of our investigation of the Spirit-filled life by having you analyze the following fictional narrative. And no, I haven't been following you around!

You get up Monday morning, make coffee, and settle in for your quiet time with the Lord. You make sure you are filled with the Spirit by examining yourself to make sure there is no unconfessed sin in your life. You have a wonderful time with the Lord in His Word. You sense that the Spirit opened your eyes to a number of things you hadn't seen before even though the passages were familiar. You close your time with prayer for your family and church needs.

Then you move on to take care of a few chores, send off an email to encourage one of your children, and have a few moments of conversation with your spouse. If anyone were to ask, you would be glad to tell them how much you love "walking with the Lord." You meet some friends mid-morning for a weekly golf outing, and on your mind is how you might share the Gospel with one of your golfing partners.

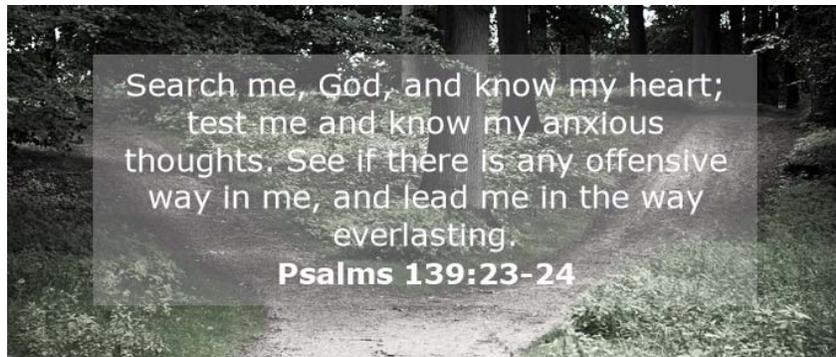
Somewhere between the first tee and the ninth green, something happens. Maybe it has to do with a few uncharacteristically poor shots. Maybe it has to do with the fact that the duffer in the group actually drove the ball further on several holes than you did. Maybe it has to do with a few words that came out of your mouth or thoughts that went through your mind, although you are quite certain no one else was aware of them. Whatever the reason, you are now in quite a funk. Your morning time with the Lord is a distant memory, and sharing the Gospel is the furthest thing from your mind!

What happened? By the way, there are many other ways this can happen, I just used this golf example because I think everyone can identify with the trend of events.

So again, what happened? Is it not evident? In this narrative you lost the filling of the Spirit. When that happens, the soul is no longer influenced by the Spirit and the Word but rather by the flesh. As soon as that happens, it is not long before the characteristics of the flesh, as described in Galatians 5:19, rear their ugly head.

I don't know about you, but it is not uncommon for me to suddenly *come to my senses* and realize the struggles of the past few hours are simply because I am out of fellowship with the Lord. Then, when I allow the Spirit of God to "*search me and try me,*" He will show me the sin that broke my fellowship. From that point I know what to do. Confess that sin, and all that followed, and then begin again to walk in the Spirit.

You see, when we sin by means of some inappropriate thought, careless word, or sinful deed, we lose the filling of the Spirit and the flesh takes over. This manifests itself in no time. Can you see why it is so important to *keep short accounts*. By that I mean to examine ourselves regularly, letting the Holy Spirit point out any sin. (See Psalm 139:23-24 below.) By doing so, we minimize our time out of fellowship and maintain the filling of the Spirit as we navigate our way through each and every day.



Part 2:

Unfolding the *Process* by Which We Walk by The Spirit

I want you to consider everything we have learned as background for the rest of our discussion. We know God has provided an *exceeding great power* for those who believe—a reference to the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. For every believer is not only indwelt by the Spirit, but also called to live moment-by-moment filled with the Spirit. And should they do so, the power of God will be manifest in their lives. The very same power that raised Jesus from the dead will in turn enable believers to walk in the newness of life that is the calling of every child of God.

What I want to do now is to transition to application. In fact, I want to address the most challenging aspect of the Christian life I can find, and then show you how God has provided the means, through His Spirit, to accomplish what He has called us to do.

Ephesians 4:1 gives us the challenge:

*. . .walk worthy of the calling with which
you were called. . .*

This calling is all that has been laid out in the first three chapters of the book of Ephesians. It starts in chapter one with the truths that we are holy and blameless in God's sight, adopted as sons, accepted in the beloved, and redeemed and cleansed from sin with an eternal inheritance. Then it continues to build upon this foundation in the chapters that follow making clear the extent of our union with our resurrected Lord and His love for us. And then we are told to "walk worthy" of this tremendously high calling.

The word translated “*worthy*” has the background idea of measuring up or being of equivalent weight. In other words, if we put our identity as a child of God on one side of the balancing scales, then the life we live is meant to be of an equivalent weight. Are you catching the significance of this? Believers are called to live a life *equivalent in weight* to the identity that God has given them *in Christ!*



This identity is so far above what we could ever be in and of ourselves, we should all be thinking, “Who could ever even come close to living such a life?” I told you that I was going to give you the most challenging aspect of the Christian life that I could find. Now let me take you to Romans 8:4:

. . .that the *righteous requirements of the Law* might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Now, although the “*righteous requirements of the Law*” are not exactly equivalent to our calling as Christians, they too represent a calling that is above the ability of any human being to meet. So we have our answer. We can live out the life to which we are called—this life in which our daily thoughts, words, and deeds balance out perfectly with who and what we are in Christ—if, and only if, we walk according to the Spirit. By this point you should be saying, “Of course—for the Holy Spirit is the “**exceeding great power**” God has provided for those who believe. It is certainly going to take supernatural enablement for any of us to live this kind of life. For no one can do it on their own strength, which is the entire point of Romans 7 (see Romans 7:24 for Paul’s cry of despair and God’s provision).

So there you have it! One of the great challenges of the Christian life is to live consistent with who and what we are *in Christ*. And God's provision, to make it possible to do so, is walking according to the Spirit! Do this, and you will accomplish everything the Bible lays out for the Christian. You will be perfect, holy, and worthy. We can now say "Amen," and close our Bibles. We can just go out there and "*walk according to the Spirit!*"

However, it won't be long before you start to ask questions. How exactly do I do this? Even if I understand from our earlier discussion both the filling of the Spirit and how to regain it should I lose it, how exactly do I live by the Spirit? What are the steps? These are great questions and will be our focus for the remainder of this booklet. However, this is a lengthy topic that God can only reveal to the hungry heart over time. These next few pages will only be a step in the right direction, meant to whet your appetite for more. We are going from principal to practice and I am going to try to be as practical as possible.

To Walk According to the Spirit

The first thing we need to know is that *the Walk of the Spirit is not a stand-alone component of the Christian life*. We can't say to ourselves, "I see the need to walk by the Spirit, so I am going to start tomorrow!" and then expect to do so as if the walk of the Spirit is independent of every other aspect of the Christian life. The walk of the Spirit is actually part of a sequence. In fact, it is very near the end of the sequence. Thus, it is essential that we understand the preceding parts in order to grasp what is meant to walk by the Spirit. I want to start with this point, because sometimes we treat the Christian life as if it is a pile of separate components from which we pick and choose the ones we like. In reality, the Christian life is meant to be an integrated whole, where we learn how one truth after another fits and relates to every other truth.

This is a big part of what spiritual maturity is all about. This is what Peter is talking about when he closes his second letter to the churches in Asia Minor:

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. II Peter 3:18

So, as we continue, I am going to try and show you at least some of the *pieces* or component parts that are meant to fit together so that the child of God might walk by the Spirit and have the enabling power of God present in his or her life. For the sake of helping us understand, I am going to try and do this explanation using the book of Romans as our guide.

The next item we need to understand is that *The walk of the Spirit is something to which only the believer can aspire.* To walk by the Spirit is not something either commanded of the lost or even possible for the lost. The Holy Spirit doesn't provide power to the lost, but rather convicts the lost of "*sin, righteousness and judgment.*" And, if you continue in the context of John 16:8, you will see that the sin issue centers upon faith in the person and work of Christ. That's the one and only focal point for the lost persons—to turn and place their faith in Christ. In using the book of Romans as our source, it is very easy to show you that, by the time we get to the admonition to walk by the Spirit in Chapter 8, we are dealing with those who have been justified, that is to be "declared righteous" in God's sight through faith in Christ.

But now a righteousness of God apart from law is revealed. . .to all and on all who believe. Romans 3:21-22

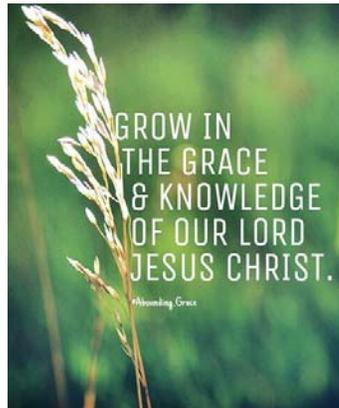
...to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted as righteousness. Romans 4:5

. . .having been justified by faith, we have peace with God. . . Romans 5:1

These passages unfold the great truth of *justification by faith!* A lost person, the ungodly, become righteous in God's sight through faith. This is apart from works and leads to peace or reconciliation with God. So by the time we arrive at the sixth chapter of Romans, we are dealing with saved people—those who have responded in faith to the death of Christ on their behalf.

To continue our discussion, *the Walk of the Spirit is the result of or flows from three basic things.* And again, just as a reminder, this is a walk in which the exceeding greatness of the power of God is manifest—the point of interest at which we began this study.

First, to walk in the Spirit we must know God's mind on a matter. (Romans 6:3 and II Peter 3:18) Romans 6:3 comes at this point from the negative standpoint, "**or do you not know.**" While II Peter 3 comes at it from the positive, "**grow in grace and knowledge.**"



Now in the context of Romans 6, the question has been brought up as to whether or not believers should continue in sin so that the grace of God would continue to increase. Paul's answer is an emphatic "No way!" And then, as he expounds on this subject, he starts with the phrase, "**Or do you not know. . .**" In other words, are you ignorant of the truths that, not only did Christ die for your sins, but you died with him so that the sin nature's power in your life would be broken as well. It is "*the blood*" that deals with our sins, and "*the cross*," specifically our positional union with Christ on the cross, that deals with our sin nature! Now this is not the specific subject which we are studying, but do you see how Paul addresses the issue.

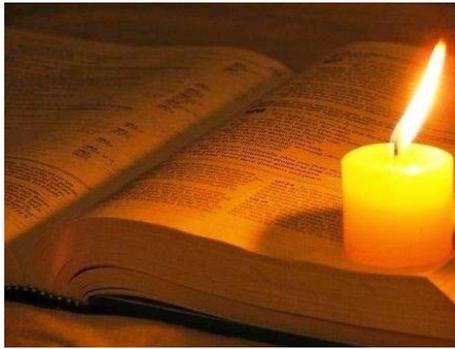
It all starts with knowing the plan of God, knowing His ways, knowing His provision as detailed in the Word of God. You see, the Word of God is revelation, light, from God to us. For the Word is declared to be “*God-breathed*.” (II Timothy 3:16). As such He is the source, and we have the written record. I am not talking about Bible facts or verses we can quote. I am talking about knowing what God has revealed on a matter. The Bible lays it out like this:

For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light. Psalm 36:9

The entrance of Your words give light; it gives understanding to the simple. Psalm 119:130

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.
John 1:4

Do you see it? No Christian has *light* on any aspect of the Christian life until they see themselves as *simple*, in need of understanding. Having done so, they come to God—to His mind as contained in His revelation—in order to obtain light. For it is only in His light we can have light. Only as His words illumine our soul shall we be able to see the truth. For it is the very life of Christ that is behind the revelation of Scripture. This means that there is no walk in the Spirit apart from having a store of God’s Word residing in our soul, content which we understand and have chosen to trust. Stated another way, no Christian can walk by the Spirit apart from a regular and ongoing relationship with the Word of God. There is no Spirit-filled life, no power of God, unless the Word of God is entering that life to illuminate it on an ongoing basis!



To walk in the Spirit and to know the exceeding great power of God for us who believe, we need to “reckon” upon what we come to know. (Romans 6:11) As you can see, we are continuing to use the book of Romans as a backdrop for understanding the walk of the Spirit. Romans 6:3 cautions us against ignorance of God’s truth, and now Romans 6:11 directs us to “reckon” upon the truth that we have come to know.

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

To “reckon” is to count something as being true. In the context of Romans 6, believers are to count as true the reality of their co-crucifixion with Christ as the means by which the power of the sin nature is broken in the life of the believer. By way of application, the walk of the Spirit always requires the believer to “reckon as true” those areas of truth that have illumined the soul and brought understanding. This has been the struggle of the saints through the ages whether Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah, or the saints of the Church-age. For God has told us over and over:

“My righteous one shall walk by faith.”

Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38

We know that...

without faith it is impossible to please God. Hebrews 11:6

So after the light of truth illumines our soul, the next step is to reckon what we know to be true and to rest upon it. You see God is looking for a dependent people and where He finds them, He will provide His exceeding great power for those who. . . **believe!** I can prove this to you:

This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 1 John 5:4

And it is not faith in and of itself, but faith in the Word of God that leads to the power of God at work in the life!

The Walk of the Spirit, requires the presenting, yielding, surrender, of that which we are in Christ!

...yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of God.

Romans 6:13 (KJV)

Now this isn't three things, it's one thing! As we know Christ through His Word, as we reckon what we know to be true, the next step is to "yield" ourselves to God. The word translated "yield" is a present, active, imperative verb. The present tense is something we are to do right now, in the moment. The active voice tells us this is something we have to choose to do. And the imperative mood makes this a command. Yielding is God's intent for the believer.

This is a very interesting word. It can mean to yield, to present, and to stand beside. The backdrop of the wedding ceremony can be very helpful in understanding the nuances of this word and its rich meaning. Picture a bride standing with her father just before the ceremony begins. She has to yield a portion of her independence in order to proceed with the ceremony and unite herself to her fiancé in marriage. If so, the father brings his daughter down the aisle and presents her to her future husband. The bride then stands beside the groom and the ceremony continues until the new bride and groom are presented as husband and wife. In the same way, the believer needs to

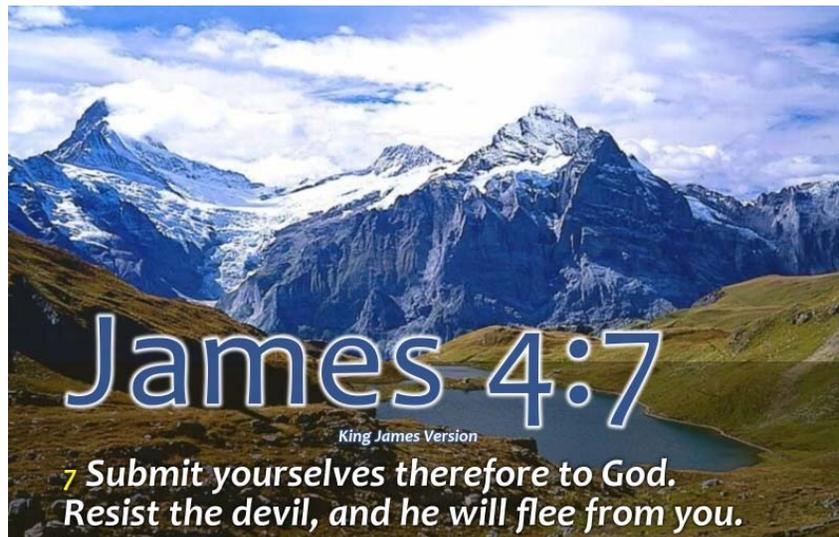
- Yield his or her will to the will of the Father as revealed in the Word
- To present the new life within—the very life of Christ in us (Galatians 2:20)—and in so doing the believer presents mind, volition, and body to the Lord for His purposes
- To stand firm "along-side" the truth of God's Word—that which one reckons to be true.

In short, once we know the truth of God's Word, and then reckon it to be true—the next step is choosing to align oneself with it—to yield ourselves unto God!

Now I want to try and make clear a very important ancillary point. There is a danger that you might take this to mean that you need to yield, yield, yield as part of walking by the Spirit as if this is something that you can resolve to accomplish. You may misunderstand this to be something that you can accomplish by force of will. If that were true, then this would be something that could be accomplished from one's own resources and its ultimate source would be self. The seventh chapter of Romans makes it clear that nothing good lives within us, that is in the sin nature. We cannot live the Christian life from the old nature as Galatians 2:20 also makes very clear:

*I have been crucified with Christ, I no longer live,
nevertheless Christ lives in me. . .*

It is the new nature in Christ, His life within, that we are to present to God. It is this new nature that will naturally yield to His will as revealed in His Word.



Manifesting the Exceeding Greatness of His Power.

As we know the truth, reckon it to be true, and align ourselves with it by presenting our new nature to God—then, and *only then can we...*

*manifest the exceeding greatness of His power
for us who believe. Ephesians 1:19*

Have you connected the dots? We don't squeeze out the walk of the Spirit as if it were something we could force to occur. Rather, we focus on knowing the truth, reckoning upon what we know, and presenting who we are in Christ to God for His purposes. It is then that we have reached the point of trusting in the Spirit of God to manifest the life of Christ in our lives. As He does, we are walking by the Spirit, and we will naturally know the exceeding greatness of the power of God at work in our lives.

You see whenever God is at work in our lives, we will know the power of God and live a set apart, sanctified life. It can be no other way. We don't have to strive by effort to walk in the Spirit, but we do have choices to make: to know, to trust, to present. When we do these things, then He will manifest Himself in our lives.

Furthermore, if a breakdown occurs—if we recognize the power of God is absent from our lives—understanding the above process gives us a much better chance of identifying and correcting the problem. If we sense our spiritual walk is *hurting*, and we realize circumstances have caused us to cut our time in the Word, we should know exactly what to do! Just as Mary did, we should set aside the time to *sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to what He has to say*. We must really listen, and then rest upon what is heard as truth, choose to yield to that truth, and then walk in dependent faith that the Spirit will bring the truth to fruition in our lives.

You see, it is not that the Christian life has been tried and found wanting. It is that it has been found challenging and left untried.

The Christian life is not a lazy life, but one that requires us to “*take up our cross daily and follow after Him.*” This is a battle that takes place in the soul, much more so than on the physical battlefield, as we learn, reckon, and yield!

Can we close by engaging in a mental exercise? Picture a fellowship in which we strive to know the mind of Christ through His Word as thoroughly and deeply as possible. Then this fellowship reckons upon what it has learned to be a source of unchanging and absolute truth. Finally, this like-minded body of believers presents themselves to God—not from the flesh, but as those who are *in Christ*—mindful of their identity in Christ, mindful of their new nature, and always on guard to nip the corrupting influence of the flesh.

Why this fellowship would be walking in the Spirit and thereby know the exceeding great power of God for those who believe. They would be instruments to accomplish His purposes in the very midst of a crooked and depraved

generation. They would be a light on a hill that would attract many in the midst of a dark and dying world. In such a congregation the glory of God would be reflected in a mighty way as they are transformed into a body that has forsaken its own strength, but gives thanks for that which God provides.

This is what I desire for this fellowship—and it is meant to be the norm for every fellowship—to walk by the Spirit of God who is the exceeding great power for those who believe. And all God’s people said, “Amen!”



VISTOSO

Community Church

He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit...*John 15:5*

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