

Lessons from Romans Book 5

Truth in Sequence

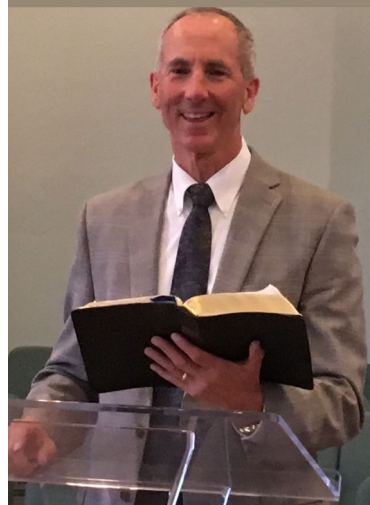
The Law of the Spirit of Life

**... through Christ Jesus
the law of the Spirit
who gives life has
set you free from
the law of sin and
death. Romans 8:2**

Alaska Christian Ministry to Seafarers

Foreword

My parents nurtured, and the military refined, a reasonably motivated and disciplined individual. There you have the short version of my testimony before becoming a Christian. But I want to make it as clear as it can be that no level of self-motivation and no level of self-discipline, as admirable as they may be, will allow you to successfully meet the challenges of the Christian Life.



The Christian Life is supernatural in quality, and thereby requires supernatural enablement! That enablement would be the Holy Spirit, and that's the subject of this little booklet. Our focus is what Romans Chapter 8 calls *the Law of the Spirit of Life!*

I am thankful for my upbringing and background, but I rely on the Spirit of God to accomplish that which I trust will be pleasing in the Father's sight.

In His grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Redig". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "K" and a long, horizontal stroke.

Kevin Redig

All Scripture quotes have been taken from either the NIV (1984 edition) or the NKJV (1982 edition).

Vistoso Community Church
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Introduction

You would think that by the time we arrived at the end of Romans Chapter 6, we would have everything we need to live the Christian Life! Our sins have been forgiven and we are clothed with the very righteousness of Christ. The cross of Christ has become our cross as the means to separate us from the power of the sin nature. As those who have trusted Christ unto eternal life, we now have a share in His resurrection life. Of course, if we carefully reviewed what we have covered in the Book of Romans, there is even more: redeemed, reconciled, standing in grace with confidence of the glory to come! What more could we possibly need?

The Surprise in Romans Chapter 7

To our surprise, Romans Chapter 7 sounds a note of discord! It tells us that it is possible for the Christian to have everything mentioned above and still be a *wretched man*. What could possibly cause this to occur, given what God has provided? The answer is simple and twofold:

1. Seeking to take what God has provided and implement it by living according to a system of law—God's law or one of our own making.
2. Seeking to live the Christian Life from the source of self: our will-power, personality, or commitment.

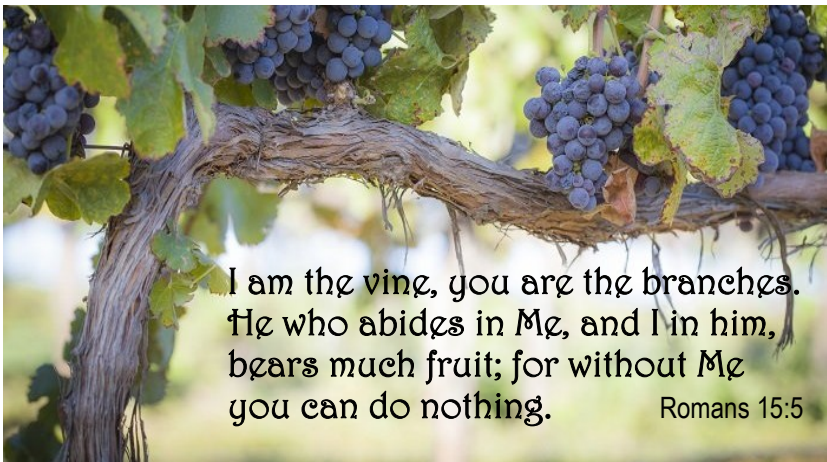
Here is the problem with seeking to live by either of these two. The purpose of the law is to point out our shortcomings—our sin. The law has no power to manifest the life of Christ and, if the holy Law of God does not have that power, then most certainly neither does self. When Jesus says, "*apart from Me you can do nothing*", He means exactly what He says.

Now that we understand the reason for the discordant note of Romans Chapter 7, we have everything we need to avoid the trap of seeking to live the Christian Life either by means of the Law or from the source of self. God does not want us to plumb the depths of Romans 7, sometimes for decades, before moving into the glorious truth of Romans Chapter 8. We do not have to experience the frustration of *wretched man syndrome* for ourselves. If we do, we need to minimize how much we squander the time God has given us.

The Wrong Solution

Much of religion teaches us to rehabilitate, commit, or surrender self. I hope the previous publication has put that issue to rest. God wants self out of the way, and so He crucified it! Then He calls us to *deny self* daily. Self-love, self-will, self-justification, self-service, and every other manifestation of self have no place in His plans for the Christian Life.

The Christian Life is all about manifesting the life of His Son—the Lord Jesus Christ! Choosing to live a life of dependent trust and receiving by faith what God has provided is not the manifestation of self. It is a return to



the kind of relationship for which we were created! You decide: Is Paul seeking to exalt self or is he consumed with knowing His Savior? Is he boasting about what he has done, which was substantial, or is he fixated on what God can yet do through him?

I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me ... one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things.

Philippians 3:10-15

Thus, I trust we might avoid time as a wretched man seeking to live the Christian Life in our own strength. If not, I encourage you to ask God to use your failure for good, for it would seem some of us like to learn the hard way. Be of good hope, victory is yet possible. So take encouragement from the following:

Faith is dependence upon God. And this God-dependence only begins when self-dependence ends. And self-dependence only comes to its end, with some of us, when sorrow, suffering, affliction, broken plans and hopes bring us to that place of self-helplessness and defeat. And only then do we find that we have learned the lesson of faith: to find our tiny craft of life rushing onward to a blessed victory of life and power and service undreamt of in the days of our fleshly strength and self-reliance.

James H. McConkey

That brings us to Romans Chapter 8.

No Condemnation

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus ...

Romans 8:1



Romans 8:1

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who don't walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

This verse is certainly great news! There is no condemnation for those in Christ, those who have responded in faith to the glorious *good news* centered in the person and work of Christ. But this verse is saying something a little bit different than we might imagine.

1. **Common usage.** This verse is often used to teach the concept that the believer cannot lose his or her salvation, even if spending time as a *wretched man!* That is certainly true, as we learned in Chapter 5.

Since we have been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through Him.

Romans 5:9

God did the greater thing by providing a way for the unrighteous to be justified before Him. It took the blood of Christ to do it! Having accomplished that great work, deliverance from His wrath is a foregone conclusion. Don't let anyone ever tell you differently.

2. **Correct interpretation.** But that is not the truth Paul is trying to communicate here in Romans 8:1, nor does it fit the context:
- The Greek word translated *condemnation* speaks of the sentence pronounced following a guilty verdict. For example, having been found guilty of a capital crime, the sentence of condemnation might be *hard-labor for life!*
 - Romans 8:1 is telling us that we do not have to suffer the wretched man experience of Romans 7:24. We do not have to live a life that seems to be stuck in the *desire to do what is good*, while doing *the evil I do not want to do—this I do!* There is a way through the inevitable spiritual discouragement that follows such a life because there is no condemnation for the one appropriating what God has provided! We do not have to have *hard-time* at the hands of the flesh, for God has a provision to avoid this.

Take note and be encouraged by the following content!

Verse 2 Provides God's Answer

Now, we have a bit more work to do with Verse 1, but let me introduce you to Romans 8:2.

... because through Christ Jesus, the Law of the Spirit of Life set me free from the Law of Sin and Death. Romans 8:2

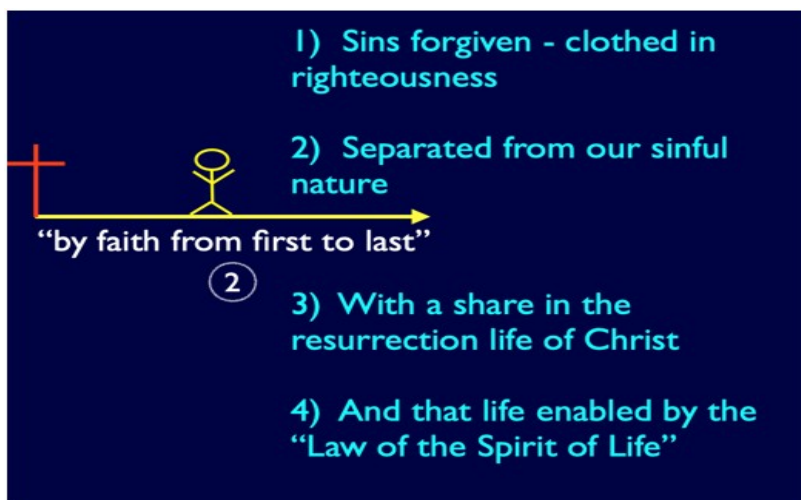
Note that I have capitalized certain words in the above text. I think it will be very helpful for you to think of them as proper nouns, which they are. I will consistently do so throughout the following discussion. There it is—the *Law of the Spirit of Life*—God's answer and the final piece of what He has provided!

Before we dig into the specifics of this verse, there are two things to note:

1. Whatever it might mean—the *Law of the Spirit of Life* is how God labels His provision to free us from sin leading to death, from the ongoing and repeated loss of fellowship in our daily lives. This is a huge transition in the flow of the Book of Romans. In Romans 1:1 through Romans 8:1, the Holy Spirit is mentioned only one time. In the rest of Romans 8, He is mentioned 21 times. Our subject matter for the verses ahead has come into focus: It is the role of the Holy Spirit to be the means to live the Christian Life!
2. Don't miss the One through whom the *Law of the Spirit of Life* is provided. It is through Christ! All God's promises are *Yes* in Him! As we will see—the ministry of the Holy Spirit is strongly connected to the person and work of our Savior.

We have now arrived at a complete picture of what God has provided in order for us to live the quality of life to which every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is called. For ease of understanding, I have broken it down into four parts, as shown in the diagram on the next page. Ponder these four parts with me:

1. Our sins have been forgiven, and we are now clothed with the very righteousness of Christ. These great events occur as part of our understanding of the *Blood of Christ*.
2. Our death (separation from the power of the sin nature which remains in our fallen bodies), this by our sharing in the *Cross of Christ*!
3. Not only are we dead to the principle of sin within, but we are alive unto God in Christ because of our share in the resurrection *Life of Christ*!



4. To complete the picture, the new life that is ours need not function under the Law of Sin and Death, for the *Spirit of Christ* is God’s provision to enable and empower all that God has provided.

Verse 3 Adds a Fuller Understanding

What remains now is for us to come to a fuller understanding of the *Law of the Spirit of Life* as we work through Romans Chapter 8. Let’s continue with Verse 3.

For what the Law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so He condemned sin in sinful man ...

Romans 8:3

For what the Law was powerless to do ... The Law—any system of rules and regulations, do’s and don’ts—cannot enable spirituality in the life of the believer. It does not have the power nor was it ever intended to do so. Note the following verses that clarify the purpose of the law.

... no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the Law; rather, through the Law we become conscious of sin.

Romans 3:20

For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.

Galatians 3:21

First, we must understand that the purpose of the Law was to confront us with the truth that we are sinners. When that realization has become clear, and we are under conviction of our condition in sin and our need of a Savior, then the work of The Law is done, and it can be set aside. No system of law can impart life, nor can it enable us to walk in newness of life. The reason is that no system of law is a source of enabling power. The Law may be holy, righteous, and good (Romans 7:12), but it cannot break the power of the flesh within nor can it enable a life acceptable to God.

God did by sending His Son... And so God stepped in and dealt with our need.



This is what we have been learning. Jesus paid for our sin, and condemned sin in the flesh by uniting us with His death, burial, and resurrection. All of this groundwork has been laid. I cannot emphasize too strongly our need to understand the sequence laid out in the Book of Romans: Sin was dealt with, our unrighteousness dealt with, our nature

to sin dealt with, and our need for life addressed! We have to understand each piece in sequence before we are ready to move on.

Verse 4 Provides the Final Piece

Now, I have a real shocker for you. Even with our sin cleansed, the power of the sin nature broken, and our being raised up with the very life of Christ, we are still not capable of living the Christian Life to which we are called. Something is missing!

That something that is missing is a source of enabling power for the new life that is ours in Christ! We see exactly this as we continue into Verse 4.

... In order that the righteous requirements of the Law might be fully met in us, who do not live by the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

Romans 8:4

It stands out in stark clarity. The righteous standards of God's holy Law can be met in only one way—a life lived *by the Spirit* and no other way. Any appeal to self, the will, or our volition will fall short because it will be compromised by the sinful nature. The new life that is ours in Christ must be empowered by the Holy Spirit!

Before we proceed with what it means to live by the Spirit, let me briefly address the phrase:

the righteous requirements of the Law. As we study our Bibles, we will quickly come to recognize that the demands upon the Christian come in many and varied forms. Picture with me these demands as the rungs of a ladder. The first rung is the *righteous requirements of the Law*. Then, as we study the truth in the New Testament, we will add additional rungs: *love one another as I have loved you, be holy as I am holy, walk in the light as I am in the light, husbands love your wives as Christ loved the Church ...*



I have illustrated living by the Spirit in this way so that we will understand something about New Testament spirituality. First, although we are not *under law*, we are most certainly intended to meet the requirements of the Ten Commandments as part of living the Christian Life. It is an absolute minimum, the first rung on the ladder. If we are lying, stealing, placing something above our relationship with the Lord, then we are most certainly not living the Christian Life—not living in light of New Testament spirituality. We haven't even reached the first rung!

Note a second thing with me. Much of New Testament spirituality is actually quite a bit above the letter of the Law. To love as Christ loved is quite an intimidating assignment, and it is found nowhere in the Law. A careful study of the New Testament call to sanctification will indicate it is at a much higher level than that found in the Old Testament. Christ died for the Church, and husbands are to love their wives in the same way. Is that a part of the Law?

So how can we possibly meet all of these lofty requirements? How are we going to achieve even the first rung according to Romans 8:4? It can only be done by *living according to the Spirit!* How do you suppose God intends for us to achieve the rest? Is it by buckling down and trying our hardest? Of course not! We couldn't even meet the requirements of the Law that way. We could not even achieve the first rung on the ladder.

Your internal light bulb will have *gone on* when you understand the lofty demands of New Testament spirituality are achieved in exactly the same way as we achieve the righteousness of the Law—by living according to the Spirit!

Let's investigate this further.

The Law of the Spirit of Life

The role of the Holy Spirit in the plan of the Father is wide-ranging in scope. Consider a few of His activities:

- The Holy Spirit baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. (I Corinthians 12:13)
- He seals every believer to mark them out as God's possession. (Ephesians 1:13)
- He provides one or more spiritual gifts to each believer. (I Corinthians 12:7)
- He indwells every believer. (I Corinthians 6:19)



Every aspect of the Holy Spirit's ministry is worthy of study, and there are many more, but let me suggest that none of these fall directly under what is meant by the phrase: *the Law of the Spirit of Life*. For, as we have seen in Romans 8:4, this aspect of the Holy Spirit's ministry to the child of God is focused upon providing the enabling power to live the quality of life to which we are called—that which we refer to as the *Christian Life*.

The Enabling Power

In keeping with our study of Romans 8, let's narrow our focus of the Holy Spirit's ministry to the believer to His enabling power.

- First, Jesus promised to send the Spirit.

"And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth."

John 14:16-17

Following Jesus' ascension, the Spirit was outpoured upon those who believe, just as Jesus promised (Acts 2:33).

Thus far we have the Spirit as *parakletos*: counselor, encourager, one who comes alongside. Next, the Spirit is going to enable us within the context of being our teacher. Discernment in the Christian Life is more closely related to daily study of the Word under the ministry of the Holy Spirit than it is to human IQ!

"But the counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will *remind you of everything I have said to you.*"
John 14:26

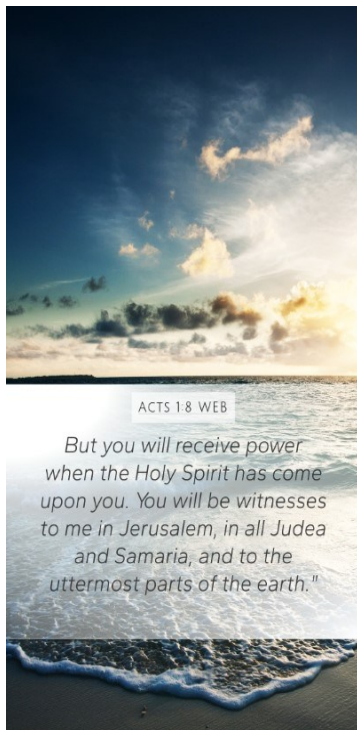
Further, the Spirit is clearly our source of enabling power!

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you ..."
Acts 1:8

I pray the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know ... His incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of His mighty strength which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him in the heavenly realms ...

Ephesians 1:18-20

Did you note that the power that raised Jesus from the dead is same power that can be at work in our lives? With that being the case, what aspect of the Christian Life can we not carry out? What calling cannot be accomplished? What quality cannot be manifested? What fruit not produced? Be careful how you answer! To find fault with any of the above is to find fault with the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit!



ACTS 1:8 WEB

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You will be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth."

In order to further understand the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, we need to recognize two further aspects of the Spirit's ministry: His *indwelling* of the believer and His potential *filling* of the believer.

The Indwelling of the Believer

A basic understanding of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit can be developed from the following passage:

Do you not know that the members of your bodies are members of Christ Himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! ... 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.

I Corinthians 6:18-20

We see Paul warning the believers in Corinth to flee sexual immorality. Why? Sexual sins are against the body, and the believer's body is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. What could be more inappropriate than involving the body in which the Spirit dwells with sexual sin! Now note carefully how the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a settled condition for the believer, for the Spirit has taken up permanent residence within each believer. Thus he or she cannot possibly lose this indwelling. That is the whole point of Paul's warning about sexual sin. Paul's argument is based upon the truth that if a believer sins sexually, he or she has taken the Holy Spirit with him—NOT that he or she has lost the indwelling Spirit!

I find it helpful to think of it this way: The Holy Spirit was poured out on every believer following Pentecost. We now understand this to refer to the indwelling of the

Spirit that is the blessed status of all who believe. In essence, God has established a base of operations in our body. Our body is now a temple of the Spirit, in order to counteract the flesh that remains as part of our fallen bodies.

The Filling of the Spirit

What then is the *filling* of the Spirit? Let's start with the following:

Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord ...

Ephesians 5:15-19

Notice that, whereas the indwelling of the Spirit is the permanent possession of every believer, the filling of the Spirit is compromised by sin. To choose drunkenness, or any sin for that matter, is to forfeit the filling of the Spirit. If we want to live the Christian Life, we cannot let the sin nature control our thoughts, words, and deeds. Instead, we must be filled with the Spirit! Isn't that exactly what the Scripture says? Further, this is also the picture developed as we continue our study of Romans.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Romans 8:5-6

There you have it once again. There are two options for the believer in Christ: To live according to the flesh or to

live according to the Holy Spirit! If you or I live according to the flesh, our minds will be occupied with the things of the flesh and we will be separated from the ministry of the Holy Spirit. That is the meaning of *death* in the context. (Remember, death always refers to some kind of separation. We are deep into the subject of spirituality in Romans 8. Paul is not writing to the lost, he is writing to the saved. The *death* he is calling out is the believers loss of fellowship with God because of being carnally-minded!)

Examples of Carnally-minded Believers

Do we have examples of believers who had their minds set on the things of the flesh and were therefore carnally minded? Not surprisingly, we do! Here is a simple one:

Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for



us whatever we ask ... Let one of us sit at your right hand and the other at your left in Your glory."

Mark 10:35,37

This request came on the way to Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, just before the crucifixion. It is virtually impossible to make the

case that James and John were unsaved at this point. But let me ask, "Did they have their minds on the things of God or the things of the flesh?"

Pretty obvious, isn't it? While thinking of themselves, they were completely out of step with the plans and purposes of God! Were they in fellowship? No way, for



Jesus then took the time to give all of His disciples a lesson on humility and servant-hood!

"... whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all." Mark 10:43-44

In our day, it has become common practice within the church to dismiss those who have evident carnality

in their lives as simply being lost—never saved to begin with. This saves us from having to explain how a Christian can commit some kind of gross sin. Maybe they are not saved—in which case they need the Gospel. But, it is also possible, because we have largely overlooked the issue of spirituality as developed in Romans 8, that untaught believers have gravitated to carnality! This is equally possible for the believer who has committed some kind of very public sin, as well as the prideful big donor who is rarely called to account.

Let me show you two quite different churches.

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.

I Corinthians 3:1

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints—the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven ...

Colossians 1:3-5

The Corinthians are carnal—that means fleshly—responding to the desires of their sin nature. But they are *babes in Christ*! What does that mean? It means they are saved but spiritually immature individuals. They desperately need to learn the content of the Book of Romans!

On the other hand, notice the wonderful description of the believers in Colossae. Let me suggest that they were doing much better when it came to *walking by the Spirit*. So, between these two different churches in two different areas is this an issue of saved versus unsaved, or is it an issue of carnal versus spiritual? It is quite clear how Paul would answer that. Don't let a false theology cloud the issue for you!

The Filling of the Holy Spirit

Now let's turn our full attention to the *filling* of the Spirit, for that is most closely related to the Law of the Spirit of Life. First, unlike the indwelling of the Spirit, which is a permanent condition of every believer, the issue of the *filling* of the Spirit is an issue of *standing*! What I mean by this is that at any moment of time, we are either filled with the Spirit or we are not. For when we sin, we are carnal and not spiritual and not filled with the Spirit.

And do not be drunk with wine ... instead be filled with the Spirit ...

Ephesians 5:18

Notice that it is one or the other.

If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.

I John 1:6

When we sin, we have broken fellowship. There is no *filling* of the Spirit where there is broken fellowship!

Walking by the Spirit

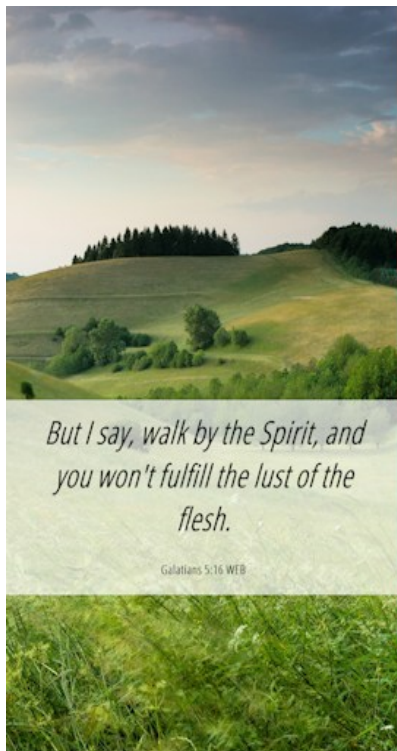
Now, let's move from whether or not we are filled, to whether or not we are *walking* by the Spirit. To *walk* by the Spirit is simply descriptive of perpetuating the filling of the Spirit as a function of time.

Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Galatians 5:16

We are to navigate our way through the day by means of the Holy Spirit—that is walking by the Spirit—until such time as sin breaks our fellowship. What do we do then? Why, confess our sin (I John 1:9), that we might be restored to fellowship (I John 1:7) and regain the filling of Holy Spirit! As you can see, this requires the development of spiritual sensitivity on the part of the child of God and a readiness to address sin whenever it occurs.

To clarify your thinking on this subject, let's attempt to define what it means to walk by the Spirit. First, a



theologian's definition, which I consider very helpful:

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

Then, with the hope you might find it helpful, let me give you my own definition developed from the study of God's Word and in particular the Book of Romans.

To walk (live) by the Spirit is: a) to moment-by-moment maintain the filling of the Spirit, through the influence of both the indwelling Spirit and indwelling Word of God, that the life of Christ might be manifest in us, as we navigate life's daily demands; b) to know, among other things, that we have been cleansed of all sin, are clothed with His righteousness and, through our association with the death and resurrection of our Savior, are separated from the power of the flesh and have His life and the enablement to manifest that life; and c) to, once we know the role of the Spirit, to steadfastly believe that He is right now doing what we do not have the strength to do in terms of putting to death the misdeeds of the flesh and reproducing the life of Christ in our own lives. (Romans 8:13, and II Corinthians 3:18)

L.S. Chafer, who wrote extensively on the Spirit-filled life, made an interesting observation about the difference between our getting saved and living the life to which God has called us once we are saved.

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. L.S. Chafer

I hope you understand now why we are devoting so much space to developing this concept. Just as there is a world of difference between an ordinary person and one who is a born-again, new creation in Christ, so too, there is a world of difference between an ordinary Christian and one who has learned to navigate the ups and downs of this life by a steadfast walk in the Spirit. It is certainly true that in the plan of God He intends for all Christians to be Spirit-filled but, sad to say, far too many are untaught or apathetic toward these great truths as developed in Romans Chapter 8.

Pause for Application

Allow me to pause for a moment and make application to the church in America. Consider with me the *stages* which have seemed to characterize the church throughout its history. These are not hard and fast, but test them in your own mind and see if they don't seem to apply to the historical church in both Europe and the United States.

Stage 1: The Word of God is revered and a pure Gospel message is boldly proclaimed! The life of Christ is manifested by the fellowship. The church seems to have a supernatural vitality indicating the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Stage 2: The message of the Gospel becomes garbled. The preaching becomes a mix of truth and worldliness. Entertainment becomes a substitute for the hard work of worship. There is evidence of carnality in the church as the sins of the culture find their way into the pews! This is a church leaving its first love!

Stage 3: There is not enough Gospel left to save. There is no witness to Christ. There is no Word taught! The church has become a building without the Spirit of God filling the people! Only a remnant remains, and soon its lampstand will be *taken away!*



So what's wrong with the church in America? You can get an idea by working your way through the above list! What's the solution? Preach the Gospel, bear witness to Jesus as the Son of God and the Christ who alone has the power to save, and teach the Word of God all of the way to the Law of the Spirit of Life. Also, as the Spir-

it enables, continue to do so!

Further, do not turn to the right or left. Do not allow even a bit of the leaven of the world to find its way into the fellowship. Do not get distracted by the drama unfolding around the Church, for we are the Bride of Christ and not of this world! Do not check out or hunker down—engage in God's calling to reach the lost and grow the saved! For how long? Until the trumpet sounds or Jesus brings you home to Himself. In the meantime, hand to the plow until death or rapture!

Living by the Spirit

Now, let's return to our text in Romans 8.

Romans 8:5-6. First, let me remind you again of the content of these verses:

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Romans 8:5-6

To place your faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ establishes a new eternal destiny—eternal life in God's heaven! As the above makes very clear, it does not guarantee the quality of the life we will live as saved children of God. What does guarantee it is whether or not we live according to the Spirit—whether or not we understand and then take up as our daily practice living according to the *Law of the Spirit of Life*!

This discussion describes the two-fold possibilities for each day we spend here on this earth as Christians: Either we will live with our minds set on the things of the flesh or on the things of the Spirit. The first results in death—separation from the plans and purposes of God. The second choice results in life and peace—the blessing of abiding in the True Vine as He produces fruit that we have the blessing to bear, and confidence in the glory to come! That leads me to an observation:

When you teach that Romans 8:5-6 refers to the lost in contrast to the saved, as many do, you remove the intent of the passage to warn the believer against squandering the Christian Life. Thereby, you fail to promote a life of watchfulness, careful scrutiny, and rapid recovery. In short, you fail to align with what God seeks to do through His Word—and that's false teaching!

Moving into Verses 7 and 8:

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Romans 8:7-8

It is certainly true that the lost, those who are *in the flesh*, cannot please God. This is why the things that mankind does, whether in government, business, or academia, are so often in conflict with the Word of God. The lost are dominated by their sin natures, and so, of course, they will be at enmity with God. This is why, Biblically, the lost are not directed to shape up their lives in order to be saved, that would be an effort to shape up the flesh which is incorrigible!

On the contrary, the single Biblical message to the lost is to believe in the person and work of Christ in order to become a *new creation in Christ!* Once we are *in Christ*, with the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit, only then can God go to work transforming our lives toward the image of His Son. The lost person is hopelessly handicapped when it comes to such transformation! This is also why the salvation of not one single person has ever



originated with man, for the lost have only the carnal mind from which to operate.

So, God takes the initiative:

- The Father draws. (John 6:44)
- The crucified Son draws. (John 12:32)
- The Holy Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment. (John 16:8).

The only thing lost souls can do is respond in a way that is without any merit on their part or any involvement to which they could lay claim. That's what faith is. It is something like the man in Mark Chapter 9 who called out to the One Who could deliver—the Lord Jesus Christ:

"I believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

Mark 9:24

That's the cry from a broken and humble heart, which is what the Savior is looking for. And so:

... to all who received Him, to those who believed in His Name, He gave the right to become children of God ...

John 1:12

But, what about those being addressed in Romans 8:5-8. They aren't being told to believe because they have already done so. Instead they are *carnally minded* and *cannot please God*. This is exactly the situation in the church in Corinth. Here is how Paul described them.

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.

I Corinthians 3:1

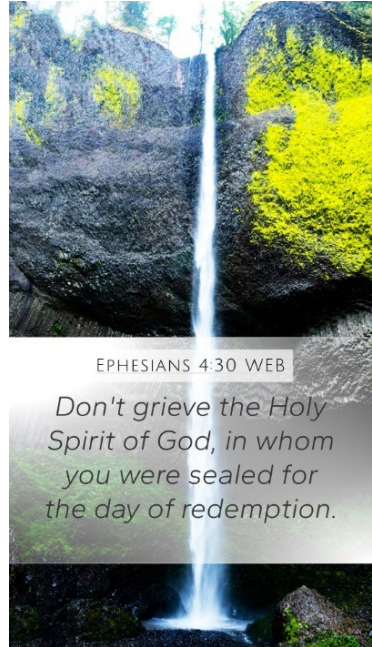
As I have told you throughout, it is possible for the Christian to be carnal. The Corinthians were. You cannot possibly interpret *babes in Christ* as a reference to lost individuals. Their position *in Christ* can only refer

to those who are saved. Thus, when the Book of Corinthians seeks to correct such things as division, sexual immorality, and the misuse of spiritual gifts. because of this behavior, our passage in Romans makes it clear that this group of Christians cannot please God! Their carnal condition must be addressed through confession of sin. Then their carnality, which is to live under the *Law of Sin and Death*, needs to be replaced with spirituality, which is exactly our subject—the *Law of the Spirit of Life*!

Addressing Carnality

Allow me to reinforce the need to recognize, and remedy as quickly as possible, carnality in the life.

- For the saved child of God to allow the sin nature to dominate the life, it is like a dog returning to its vomit (II Peter 2:22). Sin needs to shock our sensibilities and be remedied as quickly as possible.
- Carnality in the life taints everything: relationships, worship, and our receptivity to the Holy Spirit. It can be likened to a cataract dimming one's vision. It starts with barely perceptible dimming of the vision and ends in complete darkness. Biblically, this is described as an initial grieving of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30) which can continue all the way to a quenching of the Spirit (I Thessalonians 5:19).



EPHESIANS 4:30 WEB

Don't grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

- In keeping with Romans 8:9, what a pitiful situation for the Christian to be at *enmity with God* and completely unable to please Him!
- This woeful situation must be remedied immediately! Thankfully, God has a gracious answer to our need!

Let me highlight two of God's so-gracious remedies.

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

I John 1:9

As we keep short accounts through confession, the *Blood of Jesus* is more than sufficient to cleanse us from all and every sin. (I John 1:7)

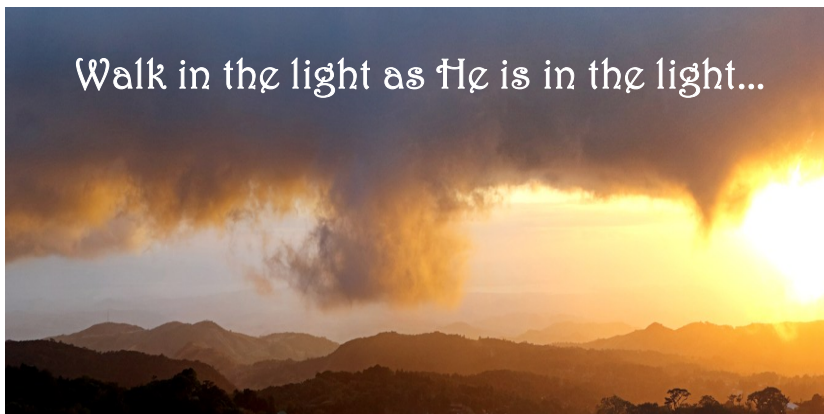
Then, we so desperately need to bathe our minds with the Word of God on a daily basis! For:

The unfolding of Your words give light; it gives understanding to the simple.

Psalms 119:130

Do you see? The Word is light! It will shine on any sin in our life that we might confess it. It will illuminate the way forward that we might walk in the light as He is in the light. (I John 1:7)

Walk in the light as He is in the light...



In the Spirit

This brings us to the challenge of Verse 9:

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

Romans 8:9

Let me begin by drawing your attention to the little preposition *in*. It has a wide range of meanings in Greek, including *in the sphere of* or *associated with*. Let me suggest that, in this context, *in the Spirit* is a reference to having the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

Next, give your attention to the word *if*. It too is more nuanced in Greek than it is in English, and in this case it is what is called a *first class condition*. That means that it is stating something that is assumed to be true for the sake of discussion. So where does that leave us; what is this verse saying? Allow me to paraphrase and expand:

But you (child of God) are no longer solely under the dominion of the flesh, but associated with the Holy Spirit by virtue of the fact that He indwells you. And, if you are not in-dwelt by the Spirit, it is because you have not yet trusted in Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

To summarize:

- Every child of God is indwelt with the Holy Spirit, as a permanent possession that can never be lost. (I Corinthians 6:19)
- The indwelling Holy Spirit provides a *base of operations* within the saved individual from which he or she can be guided and enabled, and that would be to be filled with the Spirit.

- If we are saved, we have what we need—the Holy Spirit within! When this is added to the *Cross of Christ* and the *Life of Christ*, we are on the cusp of understanding what God has provided to live every aspect of the Christian Life!

Romans 8:10-11. This brings us to Verses 10-11.

And if Christ is in you (and He is), **the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you** (and He does), **He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.**

Romans 8:10-11

We have two more *first-class conditions* in the Greek, which I have tried to help you understand with parenthetical notes.

- ***If Christ is in you***, and Paul is assuming He is because Christ is in every believer. (Colossians 1:27)

The ***body is dead because of sin***, not sins committed but one's nature to sin. This is one reason our bodies need to be replaced with a new resurrection body—our body of corruption needs to be replaced with that which is incorruptible.

- But if ***the Spirit dwells in you***, and He does because He indwells every believer.

We are given life! But you ask, "Where does this new life originate?" It comes from ***He who raised Christ from the dead***—our heavenly Father! And how is He going to bestow life? It comes ***through His indwelling Holy Spirit!***

You won't be surprised that I am going to work through this very systematically—but I want you to pause and notice something monumental!

God's Provision. Do You See What God has Provided?

- He has dealt with our sins by means of *The Blood of Christ!* (Romans 3:22-26, I John 1:7)
- He has dealt with our nature to sin by means of *The Cross of Christ!* (Romans 6:4, 6-7, 11)
- He has dealt with our need of new life, by means of *The Life of Christ!* (Romans 8:4, 11)
- And, now He has dealt with a source of enabling power for our new life by means of *The Spirit of Christ!* (Romans 8:4, 9, 11, 13, Galatians 5:22)

This is God's provision to live the Christian Life. It is everything we will ever need to walk uprightly in this fallen world, until He calls us home to be with Him for all eternity!

Point of Application

If you don't see the difference between the above and what passes for so much of Christian dogma, you need to! We have been subjected to far too much teaching that seeks to promote self-sanctification, self-control, self-management, and self-consecration. Look at the provisions of God listed above. How much of a premium does He place on the role of self? I don't find it anywhere. His premium is on the outworking of the new life—the very life of His Son—as enabled by the Holy Spirit Whom He has provided. He wants us to be enamored with the work of His Son in paying for our sins and breaking sin's power, and then to spend the rest of our lives abiding in Him, bearing fruit to His glory!



The Spirit Gives Life!

Now for the detail I promised. Although we are to *reckon ourselves dead to sin*, the sin nature that permeates our fallen bodies is under no such obligation to return the favor. We must recognize that, until we receive our resurrection bodies, our sinful nature will always be a *drag* on our spiritual life. We are to reckon ourselves dead to it—but it is certainly not dead to us! Do not be fooled, the flesh cannot be rehabilitated, it should never be accommodated, and we must give it no quarter! The short version of what we must understand is found in these words: *nothing good* and *cannot*!

... nothing good lives in me, that is in my sinful nature. Romans 7:18

Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. Romans 8:8

God has a most marvelous solution to producing the quality of life He desires for His children:

- As we have studied, the power of the sinful nature to dominate the life of the believer has been broken at the *Cross of Christ*! For:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live ... Galatians 2:20a

- Who we were in Adam has been replaced with who we are in Christ!

In Adam all die, in Christ all will be made alive. I Corinthians 15:22

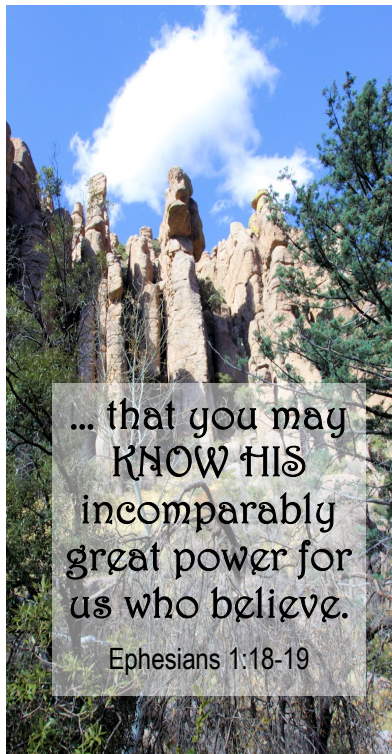
- And we are alive with the very *Life of Christ*!

... nevertheless, Christ lives in me ... Galatians 2:20

- Then to complete the story, God has given us the *Spirit of Christ*, that is the Holy Spirit, to enable the new life we have in Christ. Is He up to the task? Of course He is! Note carefully, it is God's expressly stated purpose that we know—have first hand experience of—the Spirit's power! What need could we ever have that this kind of power is incapable of meeting? None whatsoever!

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know ... His incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of His mighty strength, which He exerted in Christ when He raised him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

Ephesians 1:18-21



Mark it down: The ways of God are not the ways of man! Our great God has brought about a salvation that allows the least child of God to live in spiritual victory, despite the fallen world in which he or she is to minister. How did He do this? He brought life out of death! Who else

can do this? No one! But our great God Who has won the victory!

And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. Colossians 2:15

We Are Debtors

That brings us to our final two verses in this section:

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. Romans 8:12-13

Particularly note:

- ***we are debtors.*** We are under an obligation, for we are those who owe something to the One who saved us!
- ***not to the flesh.*** Make no mistake about it, we don't owe the flesh anything! On the contrary, God has raised us up with His Son—that *we too might walk in newness of life!*

We now know that new life to be the very life of Christ as enabled by His Spirit and guided by His Word!

Not surprisingly, Verse 13 has caused a great deal of confusion. It is really very straightforward. There are only two options for the saved child of God:

- Option #1: to live according to the flesh
- Option #2: to live according to the Spirit

Which Option is God's will? Verse 12 just made that clear in no uncertain terms: *not to the flesh!* That means Option #1 is a no-go. Of course it is—for what can it lead to other than death—and that is the message of Verse 13!

But when the verse says *to live according to the flesh will lead to death*, what does it mean?

If the flesh dominates your life:

- You will have broken fellowship with your Savior:

If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.

I John 1:6

- You will have *raised your hand* to receive discipline:

... but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness.

Hebrews 12:10

- You will be living a life that can produce absolutely nothing of value in God's sight!

This is to My Father's glory, that you bear much fruit ... apart from Me you can do nothing.

John 15:8,5

This is what it means when it says *you will die*. Death always refers to a separation of some kind. The believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has the life of Christ and an



eternal home in His heaven. But, if he or she lives according to the sinful nature, then there is broken fellowship, failed production, and the loss of the abundant life in time that is meant to be the birthright of every child of God! That's a *death* no child of God should ever be willing to accept as the status quo!

If by the Spirit we put to death the misdeeds of the flesh:

- We will know the Father through the Son. (John 14:6, 17:3)
- We will have *abundant life* while we are here on this earth. (John 10:10) This is a quality of life that is of *exceeding measure, superior in quality*, and of great blessing!



- We will be abiding in Christ, who will in turn abide in us and manifest His life through us—producing lasting fruit that will bring glory to the Father.

This is what it means when it says, *you will live!*

Now this is eternal life: that they may know You, the one true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.

John 17:3

This is a relational life that is to be ours as the result of responding to our obligation, as children of God, to walk by the Spirit Whom God has provided.

Now let me ask, for most of your Christian Life, how have you been taught to refrain from sin? I would hazard a guess that it is something other than what we have just learned, for we have just seen that God's way is to:

... by the Spirit, put to death the deeds of the body!

Romans 8:13

It is not by our force of will, but by the Spirit. As you can see in the following Scripture, our real struggle as a Christian is to be in right relationship to the Spirit of God.

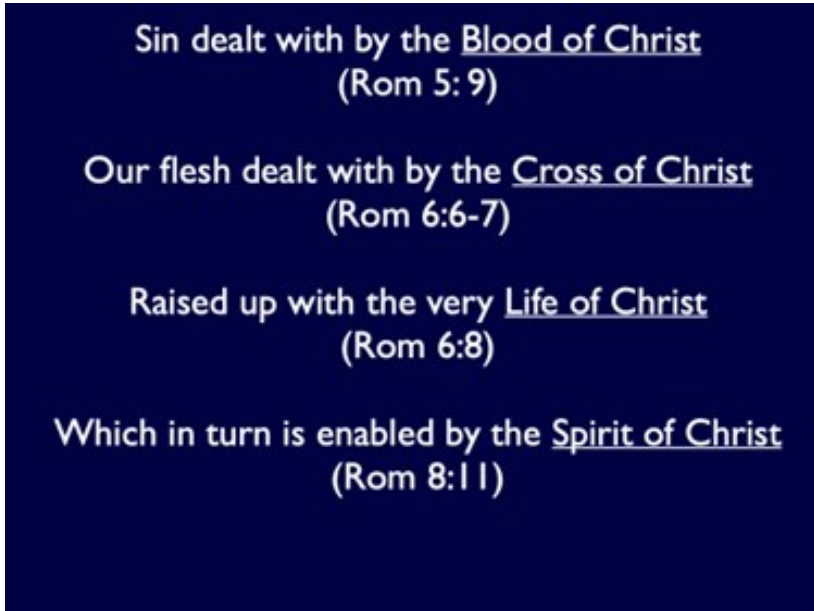
Walk in the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh ... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Galatians 5:16, 22-23

Contrary to what far too many teach, I cannot tell by observing your life whether or not you are saved for all eternity. There is no way to tell by observation whether or not you have *believed*. But I can most certainly tell by observation whether or not you are walking by the Spirit! (And so can you, as you observe my life!)

Summary and Reinforcement

Summarizing what we have learned is easy! I have provided just that on the graphic below.



No doubt, what is on your mind are questions like: "How do we put this into practice? What are the steps? Do you have a system?" You may not admit it, but we would all like a *system* that allows us to be *good* Christians!

A Partial Answer

As a partial answer to your questions, let me share something before proceeding further. People often ask, "How much time do you take preparing for a sermon?" They are, of course, thinking it is from the start of the week on Monday until I preach on Sunday!

One of those who has greatly shaped my approach to ministry told me that a pastor should spend at least ten years, and quite often longer, in preparing to preach the truths of God's Word. From that perspective, I can tell you I have been working on each message for at least 20 years, if not longer! You see, it is good for a pastor to be the thing preached. The calling is not just to communicate information. Instead, it is to respond to it personally, in faith, so that time-tested truths are communicated and those very same truths are modeled for all to see. It has taken me a long time to set aside self, in order to understand and seek to walk by faith in the truths I am communicating to you.

If the Lord were to give me another 20 years—I am certain I will have a yet deeper understanding. I am telling you all of this so that you will not be disappointed when I tell you that there is no system! Instead, I am just going to keep encouraging you to do what I believe the Bible teaches all Christ-followers to do—walk by faith in the truths of the Word and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We Do Not Have the Ability

As we seek to summarize and reinforce what we have learned, at some point something very simple needs to dawn upon you: You do not have the ability to live the Christian Life as described in God's Word! I don't care how strong your personality, level of commitment, or sincerity—it is beyond you. If God wants it done, and He does, then He is going to have to provide the means, and He has! Of course, the means includes the Word of God, a walk of faith, and many other things with which you are no doubt familiar. The simple, but essential thing often overlooked is the role of the Holy Spirit in enabling the life of Christ within.

I can support this very easily on two fronts that are really two sides of the same coin. First, look carefully at how we are to deal with the desires of the flesh. Of course, it is ours to rest by faith in our co-crucifixion with Christ so that we would be separated from sin, but then look what comes next:

... by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the flesh ...

Romans 8:13

So I say, live (walk) by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Galatians 5:16

The word translated *live (walk)* in this verse defies easy translation. It is literally the course of our footsteps. Figuratively this is our walk, the sum of our steps in the life we live. We don't keep the sin nature under control by force of will through all of our steps. Rather, the Holy Spirit puts it to death! Only in a walk by the Spirit will we continually avoid the gratification of the flesh and its desires. As I said, if we are going to live the kind of life to which God has called us, He is going to have to do it, and He is going to do so by means of His Spirit.

But how about when it comes to bearing fruit in our lives? It is the same thing. It is the life of Christ we seek to manifest and the Holy Spirit is the one who is going to do just that!

... in order that the righteous requirements of the Law might be fully met in us who do not live according to the sinful nature, but according to the Spirit.

Romans 8:4

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace ...

Galatians 5:22-23

Righteousness comes by living according to the Spirit. As we walk by the Spirit, He produces fruit that we bear!

The Word is pretty clear on this, isn't it? What we cannot do in our own strength—keep a lid on the sin nature and force out fruit—the Holy Spirit is more than capable of doing. We can trust Him to do so.

Second, this naturally brings us to the subject of faith—a topic that is a part of every aspect of the Christian Life. When speaking of those who believe, God simply says:

"My righteous ones will walk by faith."

Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17

Without faith it is impossible to please God ...

Hebrews 11:6

**This is the victory that has overcome the world,
even our faith.**

I John 5:4

I could add many more, but God's expectation is that those He has saved would grow into a daily, dependent trust upon Him. This is the only way to please Him, and the only way to have victory in the Christian Life. So for the next few pages, let's try to do two things:

1. Understand the intertwined nature of our *walk of faith* and *walk by the Spirit*.
2. Develop a picture of how our faith and the Spirit are to jointly function in practice.

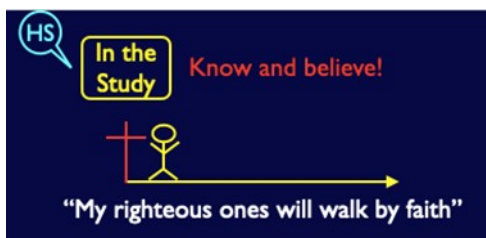
I would consider this to be advanced material, so take the time to think deeply about it.



The Perfect Harmony of *by Faith and by the Spirit!*

The Scriptures reveal the mind of God to us in a way that is meant to be an integrated whole. No one verse can contain the sum of God's so-great salvation. Any time we learn a new aspect of truth, there will always be parallel truths that accompany it. Ours is to learn one truth at a time, add them to the truth that already resides in our soul, then keep them all in proper *tension!* As an example, consider the believer's *walk of faith* and *walk by the Spirit*. A Christian Life focused on one without the other is incomplete. Seeking to live by one at the expense of the other will be a life out of balance!

For the sake of discussion, let's picture the believer *in the study*, with the Word of God in hand and filled with the Spirit. In reality, *in the study* is any-



where the believer is seeking to grow spiritually, whether that is morning devotions or sitting under teaching on a Sunday morning. What I want you to see is how faith and the Spirit are both essential components of what is meant to be happening.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

Romans 10:17

"But the counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things ... the Spirit will take from what is Mine and make it known to you."

John 14:25, 16:15

The Word of God is meant to stimulate our response

of faith. Yet, apart from the ministry of our teacher the Holy Spirit, we cannot grasp spiritual truth! He must reveal the mind of God to us because we are not dealing with secular truth, but spiritual! The goal is to know the truth and believe it! Praise God for His provision of the Word of God and the Spirit of God!

Take Note. To know and believe something *in the study* is not the same thing as making application in daily life! Truth believed is not yet a walk! The Greek word translated *walk* refers to the sum of our footsteps. What a great picture! We are to trust God and walk by the Spirit—wherever our feet take us. So this becomes the challenge for us all!

To walk by faith is to believe the truths and promises of God's Word at the point they intersect our daily lives—every circumstance, trial, and temptation! The words appropriation, reckon, and rest are of great help in putting this into practice!



Do you see? We must develop facility with taking what we learn *in the study*, and bringing it into our daily circumstances. We must put what we have learned into practice where the *rubber meets the road*! Once again, our faith and the ministry of the Holy Spirit are meant to work in perfect harmony! Let me walk you through this:

- To appropriate truth, is to select the right truth from the resources that are available in our souls—truths that we have learned and believed that are now ready for application.

- To reckon is to take the applicable truth and stand firmly upon it.
- To rest is to reach the point where our settled conviction regarding the truth has brought peace to our souls while leaving the rest in the Lord's hands!

Therefore, since the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it ... for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from His. Let us, therefore, labor to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

Hebrews 4:1,9-11

The above is the role of faith and this is what we are to grow into! See how succinctly God describes this as a place of strength!

This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says, "In repentance and rest is your salvation. In quietness and trust is your strength." ...

Isaiah 30:15

Turning from self-effort to trust is the repentance in view. Deliverance comes when we reach the point of rest. Our strength is a quiet and dependent soul—filled with the promises of God and leaving the rest in His hands. But, where is the Spirit in bringing the truth of God's Word—what we have come to know and believe—into our daily circumstances?

- Who helps us appropriate the right truth?

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit ... will remind you of everything I have said to you." John 14:26

- Who comes alongside that our faith might become perseverance in the faith?

But the fruit of the Spirit is ... faithfulness ...

Galatians 5:22

- Who helps us maintain a quiet and confident rest of faith?

For God did not give us a Spirit of timidity, but a Spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

II Timothy 1:7

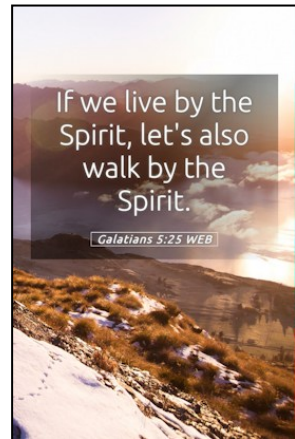
I trust that you can see it is absolutely impossible to have a *walk of faith* apart from a *walk by the Spirit!* In the plan of God, the two are meant to go hand in hand.

The Role of the Spirit. This brings us to what we have been learning in Romans Chapter 8. Specifically, we learned that following our salvation, it is the Spirit's role to give life to our mortal bodies, to put to death the misdeeds of the flesh, and to produce the fruit of righteousness in our lives. This is the *Law of the Spirit of Life!* Note again Romans 8:11, and give thanks!

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

Romans 8:11

So, we come from a Holy Spirit-fostered walk of faith, to the explicit call to walk *by the Spirit*, trusting Him to do in our lives



what we cannot do in our own strength. Do you see? A walk by the Spirit requires *trusting Him!* You simply cannot separate our walk of faith from a walk by the Spirit! I apologize for the very busy diagram. I simply wanted to put all of the pieces together for you.



So let me leave you with a final summary:

To walk by faith is to believe the truths and promises of God’s Word at the point where they intersect our daily lives. This is a moment-by-moment challenge. It is what makes the Christian Life such an active and dynamic life. It is what lies behind the words: appropriation, reckon, and rest. Every challenge, trial, and temptation we face will result in belief or unbelief—our goal is to reach the rest of faith whereby we are ready to trust the Spirit to accomplish in our lives the will of the Father as revealed in His Word! Specifically, it is putting to death the misdeeds of the flesh, and producing fruit in keeping with the new life that is ours in Christ!

So join me in learning what it means to walk by faith and walk by the Spirit. This is how God puts His life on

display to a watching physical world and heavenly host. When we get it right, it brings great glory to Him because it puts His power and His grace on display! It has taken me a while to learn it, but what God provides is so much better than the alternatives the world has to offer.

How *Spiritual* Are the Following?

I would like to do one last thing, and that is to show you some Biblical examples of what it means to live the quality of spiritual life to which we are called. This is the *abundant Christian Life* for which God, in grace, has provided every single component. We'll consider three examples: one failure, one partial success, and one walk of faith and by the Spirit.

Example #1—failure. Our first example involves Peter and can be found in Matthew 14:22-31. As soon as you turn to the text, you will recognize Peter's short-lived experience of walking on the water. A short portion of our text is provided below, but I would encourage you to read all ten verses.

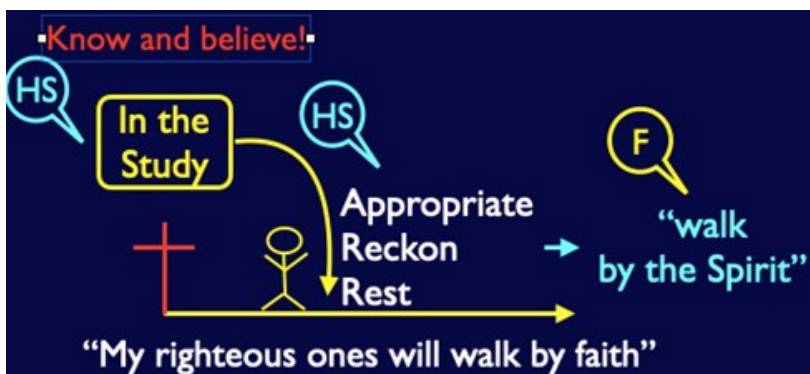
"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," He said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. "You of little faith," He said, "why did you doubt?"

Matthew 14:28-31

Now the diagram I have developed is a bit of overkill for this case, but let's get used to using it for the purpose of analysis.

- Did Peter know and believe? Of course he did! Peter declared Jesus to be the Son of God and Christ in Matthew 16. Jesus told him to come, and so he got out of the boat and started to walk on the water towards Jesus.
- But did Peter reckon upon his understanding of who Jesus was when the waves and wind got his attention? Did he enter the place of resting in faith? The answer to both of those questions is "No!" Peter started with a response of faith, but his walk of faith broke down. He failed to persevere in faith when circumstances caused him to doubt, as Jesus makes quite clear! No reckoning, no rest, and, therefore, no walk. When that happens, the child of God will sink—physically in Peter's case and spiritually for the rest of us!





Example #2—a partial success. Normally it would be difficult to use an Old Testament example to speak to the subject of living by the Spirit, but in the case of Elijah, we have an exception because he did receive a special outpouring of the Spirit. At this point, it would be very helpful for you to read the text of I Kings 18-19. Once again making use of our diagram, and the dramatic showdown at Mt Carmel, let me ask you three questions:

1. Did Elijah demonstrate his faith in the power and capability of Almighty God?
2. When he faced off against the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, with the nation watching, was he able to show that not only was he standing firm, but he was in that place of resting in God to do all that He said he would do?
3. Did he trust God to answer his prayer for rain and even demonstrate an unusual, for the Old Testament, reliance upon the Spirit?

Then the power of the Lord came upon Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel. I Kings 18:46

The answer to all of these questions is, "Yes!" Thus, if the narrative ended with Chapter 18, Elijah would be a wonderful example. Now, although I don't like what happens next in Chapter 19, it should be a powerful lesson for us regarding just how thoroughly a Spirit-filled life can fall apart when *self* gets in the way!

In I Kings 19:2. Jezebel threatens to kill Elijah. Now recall that Elijah had just faced down 850 false prophets. He did so with a mighty display of the power of God before a watching nation. In contrast to the power of God just put on display, Jezebel is a nothing! But the text tells us that, "Elijah was afraid and ran for his life." (I Kings 19:2) And, he kept running and running and running! What happened to this spiritual giant? Two portions of Scripture give us a clue:

Elijah **prayed that he might die. "I have had enough Lord," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors."** I Kings 19:4

"I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty ... I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." I Kings 19:10

Review the text carefully. Is there any evidence of Elijah trusting in the sovereign, omnipotent God he represented so well at Mt Carmel? None at all! Is he reckoning and standing firm on God's Word? Hardly! Rather than be in a place of faith-rest, he prays to die. Do you see it? He is feeling sorry for himself and whining! His eyes are on himself, Jezebel's threat, and not the size and power of the God he serves! Does it matter if they are plotting to kill you if God is on your side?

Though a thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand, no harm will come near you. Psalm 91:7

Elijah knows this because he has experienced it! But when you take too much upon yourself in serving God, and get your eyes off of Him and onto self, this is what happens. Pitiful isn't it?

So, how does God handle Elijah's lack of faith? God responds with remarkable gentleness and in a way that



reinforces all that we have been learning, for God reveals Himself to Elijah.

After the wind, fire, and earthquake, in which the Lord was nowhere to be found, ... *came a still small voice* of the Lord. (I Kings 19:12) Elijah had reached the end of his rope, and what was God's answer? It was the ena-

bling power of His Spirit.

"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit ..."
says the Lord of hosts.

Zechariah 4:6

Likewise, in seeking to rebuild the temple and govern the returning Israelites, Zerubbabel faced a challenge that was beyond him. What was God's answer? By now we should know! God's call on our lives is beyond our own strength, but not His! We are to live, not by our might, but by His Spirit.

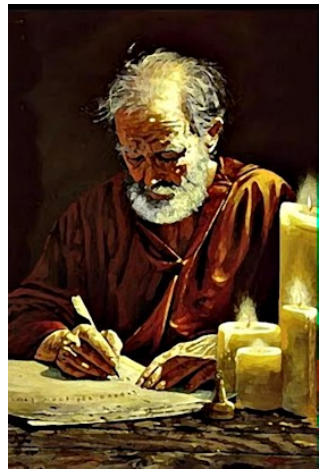
Of course, this has great application to us as pointed out in this quote:

We, too, are on a journey that ends in glory. But a journey in which there are trials to meet, difficulties to overcome, testimony to be borne, and opposition to be faced. For ourselves, also, we may say the journey is "too great" and we are too small for the journey. But if the journey was too great for Elijah, it was not too great for Elijah's God." H. Smith

Example #3—an example to follow. Our final example is the Apostle Paul during the time of his imprisonment in Rome during which he wrote what are often referred to as his *prison epistles*.

Philippians is one of these epistles. Picture Paul under house arrest, chained to a Roman soldier, and read Philippians Chapter 1.

Notice how Paul starts in describing himself as a *slave of Jesus Christ*, even though he is under arrest and watched by Nero's guards. He goes on to make one amazing statement after another:



- My imprisonment has served to advance the Gospel. (Philippians 1:12)
- It is clear throughout the whole palace guard I am in chains for Christ. (Philippians 1:13)
- My chains have caused others to preach more boldly. (Philippians 1:14)

- I trust that now, as always, Christ will be exalted in my body by life or death. (Philippians 1:20)
- Then his most amazing statement of all:

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Philippians 1:21

Does it seem like Paul is trusting in the Lord in the face of difficult circumstances? Absolutely!

Does it seem like he is reckoning on the truth he knows?

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

Acts 20:24

He seems very focused doesn't he? But is he spiritually at rest?

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Philippians 1:21

It would seem so! I am thinking of the time he was beaten and thrown into jail in Philippi. What do we find him doing late into the night? Singing hymns!

Is He trusting in the Spirit of God to work through him rather than trusting in his own strength?

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:13

And, how does Christ strengthen? By His Spirit! The walk of faith and a walk by the Spirit, available to every Christian, is how a child of God can:

- Be imprisoned by man and see himself as serving Christ

- Go through trying circumstances and in his body glorify Christ
- Be martyred for the faith and claim it as gain! Let me take you back to Romans 8 once more:

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

Romans 8:11

A Final Word

The Christians walk of faith requires the time necessary for spiritual growth and, by necessity, will only develop through trial. But, it is worth it, for standing firm in the walk of faith that moves from truth to truth will navigate this life from one harbor of safe refuge to another. This is meant to be the strength of the child of God which, in reality, is founded upon His strength, His faithfulness, and His Spirit. All the while He is steadily perfecting His work in us and through us!

I would like to close our wonderful look at God's gracious provision for our spirituality by praying for you:

Heavenly Father, may we learn to distrust self, set it aside, and take up all that You have provided, so that we would not act according to the desires of the flesh but instead walk in newness of life! We know this to be the very life of Christ which He is willing to share with us. Might we learn to trust the Spirit of God to manifest this life in us in keeping with the Word of God.

So Father, guide us to grow into a walk of faith and a walk by the Spirit, knowing that we too can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. And Lord, we so desire to put on display Your glory to a watching and needy world. May we be ever quick to share the light of the Gospel in order to exalt the name of Jesus and turn many to put their faith in Him unto eternal life! In Jesus' name we pray, Amen!





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