



HOW TO GAIN VICTORY OVER **SIN**

Knowing the Sanctification
of the Holy Spirit

Andrew Bernhardt

Second Edition

HOW TO GAIN
**VICTORY
OVER SIN**

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Also by the author:

Seeing Jesus - A Disciple's Perspective

How To Gain Victory Over Sin - Second Edition

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*“Not by might,
nor by power,
but by my Spirit...”*

Zechariah 4:6

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Introduction

The saying is faithful and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...¹

Dear Reader,

I wrote this book to help a specific group of people, so I am going to assume two things are true of you:

First, you are a born-again believer in Jesus Christ. You have put your trust in Him and His finished work on the cross to save you from your sins. As a result, God has taken away the burden of guilt, and has given you new life in His Son.

Second, you still struggle with sin and temptation. You know your sins are forgiven, and you want to live in a way that pleases God, but it really bothers you that you can't stop sinning. Sometimes you manage to resist temptation for a while, but eventually it seems you always fall. As a result, you find yourself burdened with guilt and shame over your actions on a regular basis.

If you find this describes you, welcome to the club—I'm a fellow-struggler myself! But I have found some things of great value in the scriptures that give me hope. I want to share what I've learned and show you the God-given way to overcome practical sin in your life. I don't mean to say that sin is now a thing of the past for me, because it isn't. While success in the spiritual battlefield comes through specific, God-given means, I still have habits of doing things my way. However, I have found the road to victory, and I'm learning how to walk it. You, too, can know the

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truth of 1 Timothy 1:15 in a *practical* way: Christ Jesus came into the world, not just to save lost sinners, but to save born-again ‘sinners’!

“But wait!,” you object. “I’m a saint, not a sinner!” True. But practically speaking, you still sin. Jesus Christ came to save us from all aspects of sin, not just its consequences. Two verses earlier Paul said, “I was before a blasphemer, a persecutor, and insolent.” He no longer lived that way because God was working in him to change him. The same power to change the worst of sinners is available to change you.

What follows is a practical introduction to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. In the first part of this book, we’ll discover what makes resisting temptation so difficult, and we’ll see what God does to make victory over sin possible. Following this are additional articles about the Holy Spirit and sanctification that I hope will help you in your walk with Him. But however helpful you may find this book, it is only an introduction to this important subject. I strongly encourage you to take time to study the Holy Spirit’s role in your sanctification. At a minimum, you should look up the scripture references in the endnotes and read them in context. Then put what you learn into practice, trusting God to do His good work in you to make you like Christ.

* * * * *

This second edition of *How To Gain Victory Over Sin* adds a few more articles on the Holy Spirit’s role in sanctification, as well as a chapter from Charles Haddon Spurgeon’s helpful book, *All Of Grace*. Each article approaches the topic of sanctification in a different way, and each can be read independently on its own. As

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with the first edition, I've provided plenty of endnotes to help increase your understanding and encourage further study.

My purpose here is to draw attention to the most essential and neglected part of resisting temptation: walking in dependent submission to the Holy Spirit. But this is not the only important part. You should also spend time with other like-minded believers so you can study God's word together, share each other's struggles and burdens, pray for and encourage one another. We are individual believers, but God made us dependent on the Holy Spirit working through each other, so that as one body we can grow closer to Christ.²

If you find this book has been of benefit to you, pass it on to another struggling believer. An online comment or review would also be appreciated.

ANDREW BERNHARDT

June 13, 2017

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Our Common Experience

I grew up in a Christian home with believing parents, and came to salvation at an early age. That, in itself, did not guarantee I would never live on the ‘other side of the tracks’. There are many who grew up in Christian homes, but you wouldn’t know it from how they live today. I could have been like them, but God has been gracious to me in this respect.

In spite of my lack of ‘history’, I am like any other born-again believer: I find it difficult to live the Christian life. I don’t mean coming to church on Sundays, reading my Bible, or praying. I don’t find those things difficult at all. But I do struggle with sin and temptation on a daily basis. I struggle with lust. I struggle with self-control. I struggle with loving others from the heart. The reason I struggle is not because I am unusually weak, but because I have the same fallen human nature we all share in this world. I know it’s not God’s will for me to give in to temptation, and it seems the only alternative to giving in is to struggle.

Sometimes losing the battle with sin appears to be inevitable. It’s not just outright temptation I have to deal with, but the constant thoughts of my mind and the wayward desires of my heart. I want to be more like Jesus—to love like Him, to be patient like Him, to deny myself, take up my cross, and follow Him. But Satan regularly attacks my faith, and the world constantly tries to lure me away from my Lord. To make matters worse, my flesh natu-

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rally wants to side with Satan and the world. The fight is very tiring. Sometimes the odds for winning the battle against sin appear hopelessly stacked against me.

And yet Jesus said, “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”³

There have been times when I felt I could never know the reality of this. The struggle was just too difficult. When I’d fail, I’d beat myself up, and feel like I hadn’t the energy to resume the fight.

Perhaps you find what Jesus said difficult to believe. Maybe you’ve dismissed the easy yoke and light burden as an impossible ideal. You may even doubt your salvation because you haven’t been able to “overcome the world.”⁴ If so, I want to share the hope I’ve found.

Know this: Jesus did not do away with one impossible standard (the Law⁵), to replace it with another impossible standard. He knows our struggles, and He has a solution for them. But to grasp this solution, we first need to be confronted with our need for the solution.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul presents to us the doctrine of salvation in a very systematic manner. In the first five chapters, he writes about justification, that is: getting into a right relationship with God. He begins with our need for salvation, continues with our inability to save ourselves, and ends with God’s solution to our problem.⁶

After concluding the topic of justification, Paul covers sanctification (how we are to live) in the same orderly way. In the next three chapters he describes the need to live right, our inability to do so, and God’s solution to our problem. We’re going to focus on this second section of Romans, especially the 8th chapter, because it

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contains the solution we're looking for. But before we move on, it is essential to have a firm handle on the fact that these three chapters are about sanctification, not justification. By this point, Paul has completed his argument that justification is entirely through faith in the finished work of Jesus.⁷ If you assume parts of chapter 8 are also about justification, it will appear Paul contradicts himself, especially in verses 4, 8, and 13. But there really is no contradiction. Justification provides freedom from condemnation, the eternal consequences of sin. Sanctification provides freedom from the power of sin in this life. It is the latter that Paul is concerned with here, and I shall remind you of this at times.⁸

An Elusive Reality

Paul begins this part of Romans by telling us how we are to live once we've been saved. Since we have been freed from sin, we are no longer to walk in it:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? May it never be! We who died to sin, how could we live in it any longer?...Therefore don't let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. Neither present your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.⁹

This whole chapter of Romans deals with God's intent on how we are to live as born-again believers. Victory over sin is not just an ideal. It is supposed to be a reality. We are not to treat grace as a license to sin. Grace is really a call to live righteously.

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However, there's a problem here, and Paul was aware of it, even as he was writing. The problem is that this chapter, taken by itself, presents a standard that is *impossible* to live by. Paul knew this, and in the next chapter he goes on to describe his own experience in trying to live up to the standard:

...For I don't know what I am doing. For I don't practice what I desire to do; but what I hate, that I do. ...For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing. For desire is present with me, but I don't find it doing that which is good. For the good which I desire, I don't do; but the evil which I don't desire, that I practice. ...For I delight in God's law after the inward man, but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members.¹⁰

It's tempting to think Paul is speaking here of his life before Christ, but that is not the case. He has not interrupted his current topic to go back to an issue he has already fully addressed. Paul has a new heart that delights in the law of God, not just in Jewish traditions. He wants to do good. Besides, before he was saved, Paul was not aware of any inner conflict. He thought he was able to live up to the Law blamelessly.¹¹ Only after salvation did he find he couldn't stop sinning.

So, even as a saved believer in Jesus, Paul found himself doing the things he did not want to do. While delighting in God's Law, he found himself to be a practical slave to sin.¹² He wanted to do good, but he kept doing evil. His spirit was willing, but his flesh was weak. I identify with this, and I expect you do, too.

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Most of us feel the need to struggle to live up to the Romans 6 dead-to-sin-and-alive-to-God standard. But hopefully, through honest self-examination, we realize the struggle is futile, and we get to the point where we despair of ever being able to overcome sin through sheer will power. We echo Paul's frustration when he said:

*What a wretched man I am! Who will deliver me out of the body of this death?*¹³

We all need to come to this point in our Christian experience. It might not seem like it, but it really is a good thing when we hit our bottom. It is only when we come to realize our utter hopelessness to overcome sin in our lives that we can become receptive to God's solution.

A Confusing Victory

Paul describes this solution in the next chapter, but before he gets there, he writes something that is, at the same time, both encouraging and depressing:

*...I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord! So then with the mind, I myself serve God's law, but with the flesh, the sin's law.*¹⁴

Paul points to where our victory over sin lies, and it certainly does not lie in our own personal efforts. My deliverer from the 'body of this death' is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is His sovereign power that gives me victory.

However, it used to be when I read this chapter and came to this verse, something didn't sit right. Why would Paul give thanks to God while admitting he still served sin with his flesh? I used to

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reconcile this by thinking Paul was thanking God for the forgiveness of his sins that was made possible by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

But after reading and re-reading this section of Romans, the context forced me to conclude Paul was thanking God for *practical* victory in his struggle with sin. He was thanking God for sanctification, not salvation.¹⁵

But it still didn't make sense to me. I identified with Paul's struggle. So how can it be a good thing that, while I serve God with my mind, I still serve sin with my flesh? *I don't want to serve sin with my flesh! I want to serve righteousness with my flesh!* What am I thanking God for here?

Then I saw it. Paul had already given us a little taste of the answer earlier in chapter 7:

*But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that in which we were held; so that we serve in newness of the Spirit, and not in oldness of the letter.*¹⁶

You see, Paul was losing the sin battle because he was trying to fight sin the old way: by keeping the law. Law-keeping attempts to correct the outward actions, but it is powerless to correct the inner cause of sin. Therefore, God has provided a new way to live: through the promised Holy Spirit that Jesus sent down for us. As we move into the next chapter, Paul explains why this is such a good thing.

God's Solution

First, to those who keep losing the sin battle, Paul addresses the self-condemnation issue. Immediately (!) after admitting he himself served sin in his flesh, he says:

*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...*¹⁷

Even while Paul was still serving sin in his flesh, God did not condemn him, because he was *in Christ*.

You may condemn yourself over your constant failures to live up to God's standards, but if you are *in Christ* (...and only God can put you in Christ), Paul assures you that God does not condemn you for the evil you can't stop doing (Romans 7:19, 23). Jesus Christ paid the full penalty for your sin on the cross. It is because of the righteous blood He shed that God does the unthinkable: He *justifies the ungodly!*¹⁸ So, if God doesn't condemn you for your sins, you shouldn't condemn yourself either.

We should always be thankful for being delivered from the condemnation of the law. But, as Paul said earlier, we are not to use our freedom from condemnation as a license to sin. Romans 6 is still God's intent for you and me.¹⁹ (By the way, if living in sin doesn't bother you, you should seriously question your salvation!²⁰)

So, if God wants us to live righteously, but we can't stop sinning, how do we resolve our dilemma? Here's how:

True practical freedom from sin is not obtained by personal effort, but by walking in the Holy Spirit. Instead of focusing on your sin or on trying to keep the Law, you need to focus on Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit He has freely given you.

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Continuing on in Romans chapter 8, Paul tells us how he personally found freedom from sin:

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death. For what the law couldn't do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God did, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh²¹; that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.²²

There are three kinds of laws mentioned in this passage. In reverse order, they are:

- The Law of Moses, in verses 3 and 4. This is the law that reveals God's standard of righteousness. The Law is righteous and good. It says you must not do this and you must not do that, but it doesn't give you any power to fulfill its demands. Our flesh is too weak, handicapped by our sinful nature, to keep all of its requirements. The Mosaic Law doesn't help us. All it does is condemn us:

Now we know that whatever things the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God.²³

- Next, there is the law of sin and death in verse 2. This law is the operating principle we find within ourselves when we try to keep the Mosaic Law. It is the 'other law' mentioned in Romans 7:23, the one that won't let us keep God's law, even though we want to. The Mosaic Law, while good in itself, empowers sin in our fallen nature, which results in death.²⁴ The Mosaic Law reveals this law of sin and death *that is already in us*, and therefore it justly condemns us.

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- Finally, in verse 2 there is the law of the Spirit of life. Unlike the Mosaic Law, this law is the power of God actively working in those of us who are in Christ through His Holy Spirit. It *completely* overcomes the law of sin and death, and brings us into right *practical* relationship with God, fulfilling the requirements of the Law of Moses.²⁵ The important thing to note here is that the power of this law is experienced, not by those who try to keep the Mosaic Law, but by those who walk in the Spirit. As Paul says elsewhere:

*...walk by the Spirit, and you won't fulfill the lust of the flesh.*²⁶

A Different Hope

Walking in the Spirit is the key to gaining victory over sin. But you may say, "I already know that, and yet I still struggle with temptation! I still sin!"

Yes, you do! And so do I! But we've only looked at part of God's solution to our problem. Let's continue on.

If you're like many believers today, you probably think of the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work in you as somehow transforming your fleshly nature to make it more like Christ. The Holy Spirit is helping you to lie less, to overcome an addiction, to be less of a hypocrite, to be more loving, and so on. He pushes you to somehow do better. If you have been thinking this way, stop!

Listen: The Holy Spirit was not given to improve or correct the flesh. The fleshly nature will always be sinful because the mind of your natural self is an incorrigible rebel against God, and it will always be your worst enemy as well.²⁷

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...because the mind of the flesh is hostile towards God; for it is not subject to God's law, neither indeed can it be. Those who are in the flesh can't please God.²⁸

The fleshly nature never improves. We have this idea that as Christians our flesh gradually becomes better, but it doesn't. It actually gets worse. The recovering alcoholic can identify with this. An alcoholic can have sobriety for 40 years, but all it takes is one drink to find himself exactly where he left off, showing there never was any real improvement to the addiction.

Before you can gain victory over sin, you must first accept the fact that your natural mind will always be in rebellion against God. Your flesh will never willingly submit to God's rule, and if you insist on forcing it to do so, you might as well get used to disappointment!²⁹

This is why Paul admitted he served sin in his flesh at the end of chapter 7, and it's the reason why we also cannot conquer sin through any amount of self-effort. Trying to reform our minds and actions is just a waste of time. It's hopeless. The only appropriate action to take for the fleshly nature is to put it completely to death by the power of the Holy Spirit.

So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if you live after the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.³⁰

Imagine you see a dandelion on your lawn. You pull the weed up, but a week later it's back. You pull it up again, but it still comes back. No matter how many times you pull it, that stubborn weed keeps coming back! The problem is you're only removing the top part of the plant. You're not getting at the root.

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Sin is like the top part of that weed, and the fleshly nature is its root. While it's certainly better to pull the weed of sin up than to let it grow, unless the root is dealt with, sin will keep coming back.³¹ Sanctification is the process by which the Holy Spirit gradually kills the root of the fleshly nature. It is only as He does His work in us that our efforts in resisting temptation will meet with success.

We'll look at this in more detail later, but for now understand God does not expect you to live a righteous life through *self*-effort. He knows it is impossible for you, and therefore He is not going to condemn you for your failures (Romans 7:25–8:1). Just as your salvation has been accomplished by the work of Jesus Christ, so your sanctification is being accomplished by the work of the Holy Spirit. Your sanctification is God's on-going work, and therefore the results are His responsibility. *Don't beat yourself up over something that is not your responsibility!*³² Your part is to simply walk by faith in submission to His Spirit. Cease from your own work and yield to His power and direction. Let Him do His work in you and leave the results with Him, ...so *He* gets the glory. Yes, it takes time to learn this, but trust Him!

Now don't misunderstand me. Sanctification is not a passive "Let go, and let God" process on our part. I'm not against works—I'm just against those works of the flesh.³³ We will look at what we are to do, but first we need to understand our absolute reliance on God's power in us to overcome the root cause of our sin.

*But if the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised up Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.*³⁴

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Once you grasp the concept that your sanctification is just as much God's responsibility as your salvation, you will find release from self-condemnation. And this will enable you to look to Him to do His work in your life.

If you still struggle with a particular sin, don't worry about failure. Get your eyes off your sin and on to Jesus. Trust His Holy Spirit to work in you to change your heart and mind. When you sin, confess it to Jesus, thank Him for His blood which covers it, and *immediately get back in step with the Spirit*, submitting yourself to Him and depending on His power to overcome the flesh. Your focus should not be on sinning less but on walking in the Spirit more—even continually. As the latter happens, the former *will* happen as a result.³⁵

For most of us the first eight chapters of Romans picture the path of progress in our Christian walk. Chapters 6 through 8 can be summarized this way:

- A chapter 6 believer is someone who acknowledges we are not to sin, but hasn't been serious about putting it into practice, or honest with himself about his inability to do so.³⁶
- A chapter 7 believer is someone who has attempted to put chapter 6 into practice, and has come face to face with failure. He realizes his need for supernatural intervention.³⁷
- A chapter 8 believer is someone who relies on God's solution to the problem exposed in chapter 7. He seeks to walk in submission to the Holy Spirit—and *experiences victory over sin when he does so!* He realizes his sanctification is not just his goal, it is God's goal.³⁸

Which chapter are you?

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*“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God,
these are children of God.”³⁹*

*“Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh
with its passions and lusts.*

If we live by the Spirit, let’s also walk by the Spirit.”⁴⁰

*“It is the Spirit who gives life. The flesh profits nothing.
The words that I speak to you are spirit, and are life.”⁴¹*

*“But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror
the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image
from glory to glory, even as from the Lord, the Spirit.”⁴²*

*“... ‘Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,’
says Yahweh of Armies”⁴³*

Two Warnings

I hope what we’ve seen so far opens your eyes to the possibility of overcoming sin in your life. It has certainly done so for me. Before we move from doctrine to how it works out in real life, I need to warn you of two wrong turns that can sidetrack us right from the start.

First, if I present a laundry list of things to do, it would be easy and natural for you to try to do those things in your own strength. But that would be missing the whole point.

Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now completed in the flesh?⁴⁴

Simply put, walking in the flesh is doing anything apart from walking *in submission* to the Spirit.⁴⁵ There are all kinds of good things you can do, but unless you do them under the leading and

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power of the Holy Spirit, they will eventually result in sin, and we don't want to go there.

This leads to the question: How can you know if you're walking in the flesh? I've sometimes heard it described by the word *trying*:

"I'm trying to control my temper."

"I'm trying not to think lustful thoughts."

"I'm trying to love my neighbor."

If your focus is on trying to obey, it's a good sign you're relying on your own strength rather than God's strength. The Spirit does not work through your trying to keep the law.⁴⁶ You cannot work the change from the outside in—you might as well try filling the outside of a bottle. God must work the change from the inside out.

Elsewhere, Paul warned the Philippian believers about the Judaizers who wanted to bring elements of law-keeping into the church. He said that is not the way we are to live:

*For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*⁴⁷

In the original language, the word 'worship' here refers not to the worship of praise, but to how we live for God in our day-to-day lives. In my natural strength, doing the right thing is a chore. It's a battle I know I *will* lose. Galatians 5:17 says there's a war going on in me between my natural self and the Spirit.⁴⁸ There's enmity between them, a battle for mastery. If I try to please God in my own strength, I'm taking the wrong side as much as if I seek to satisfy my fleshly desires. I'm grieving the Spirit and feeding the flesh. I *will* experience defeat as a result.

Don't be deceived. God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh

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*reap corruption. But he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.*⁴⁹

We usually understand these verses as a warning against carnality, but keep in mind Paul was speaking to outwardly moral believers who were trying to keep the law. It may come as a surprise to you, but just by trying to live a morally upright life, you could be living in the flesh! This is because legalism and the flesh are closely tied together.⁵⁰

My earnest desire is that you abandon all hope in your own ability to live righteously, so that you put all your hope in God's power in you to live righteously. Otherwise, you will get sidetracked into fleshly "trying."

If you think you have a sin or weakness under control, or a particular temptation is behind you, humble yourself quickly before you fall! You will never have your weaknesses under control apart from continual submission to the Holy Spirit. Don't hope to become stronger to withstand temptation. Instead, put all your hope in Christ and His Spirit to give you grace to stand day by day.

The other way you could get off track is by being spiritually lazy. I've emphasized the necessity of relying on the Holy Spirit to do His work in your life. That doesn't mean sitting back and doing your own thing while waiting for sanctification to miraculously happen. To gain victory over sin, you must replace walking in the flesh with *walking*, not merely resting, in the Spirit. It's impossible to replace walking in the flesh with nothing at all.⁵¹

What does it mean to walk in the Spirit? To answer that question, all we have to do is look at the life of Jesus in the gospels.

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When Jesus came to earth, He “emptied” Himself⁵², laying aside His own power and will. As God in human flesh, Jesus was fully able to minister in His own strength. He could have done what He wanted without sinning. However, He denied Himself and submitted to the Holy Spirit’s leading anyway. After His baptism, the Spirit came upon Him and led Him into the wilderness to be tempted. When Jesus returned to Galilee, He did so in the power of the Spirit. He then preached and performed miracles by the same Spirit.⁵³ His life was a channel for the Spirit of God to work through.

We also need to walk the same way: to empty ourselves, pray in the Spirit, love in the Spirit, serve God and live to Him in the Spirit.⁵⁴ This is not merely trying to imitate the life of Christ. It is the Spirit of Christ⁵⁵ actually living through us as we rely on Him to direct, guide, and empower us. It is the “Not I, but Christ” life of Galatians 2:20–21.⁵⁶

An essential part of walking in the Spirit is abiding in Christ. Jesus said we can do nothing unless we abide in Him. But when we abide in Him, the result is fruit for God.⁵⁷

When I think about fruit, I picture an apple tree. An apple tree does not work or struggle to produce apples. As long as it remains connected to the root, the life-giving sap flows through it, and fruit develops naturally. When we remain connected to Christ, the ‘sap’ of the Holy Spirit flows through us, and over time we produce *much* fruit:

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control. ...*⁵⁸

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Not surprisingly, this is what characterized the life of Jesus on earth. Fruit is the evidence that the Holy Spirit is at work. You could see it in the church at Pentecost, and in the Philippian and Thessalonian churches.⁵⁹ The Corinthian believers, however, while having a reputation for being Spirit-filled, were carnal. They lacked love for one another, and their church was cliquish and plagued with immorality.⁶⁰ Clearly they were walking in the flesh, not in the Spirit.

First Steps

If you're like me, you'll probably find the biggest obstacle to walking in the Spirit is simply remembering to do so. With the world and life in general offering plenty of attention-grabbing distractions, how do we keep God at the forefront of our thoughts? I believe it begins with an urgent sense of need for Him.

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.*⁶¹

When Jesus talked with the woman at the well, He spoke of a thirst only He could satisfy. The apostle John tells us that thirst was for the Holy Spirit. Just as water consumes our thoughts when we're in great thirst, the path to continually walking in the Spirit begins with a consuming sense of thirst for the Holy Spirit.

Most Christians would agree Jesus sent His Spirit because He knew we needed power to be witnesses for Him and to serve Him. But few recognize their absolute dependence upon the Spirit to overcome sin and become like Christ. Yet this is why Jesus gave us His Spirit: because He knows we can't do it on our own.⁶² To sense our spiritual thirst we must recognize our need as well. A big part

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of this is becoming aware of the specific ways we are enslaved to our own way of thinking.

While the fleshly nature usually expresses itself in the words you say or the things you do, it's really about what's going on inside you. The flesh operates through attitudes such as pride, self-righteousness, lack of godly love, and the unwillingness to forgive others. It is motivated by things like money, pleasure, happiness, comfort, security, and even blessings—things that may be good in themselves, but are evil when they become our goals, and God merely a means to attain those goals.

Learning to recognize the flesh-walk is difficult because we've been immersed in it all our lives. It seems so natural that we're not even aware of it. You may think you're doing okay. You may even believe you are walking in the Spirit. But if the fruit listed in Galatians 5:22–23 isn't increasing in your life over time, you're not doing as well as you think. You probably have a hidden, fleshly stronghold somewhere.⁶³ Those strongholds in your life don't have to remain hidden, however. You can discover them by taking time to read and especially *meditate* on the living word of God.

*For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and is able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*⁶⁴

When you read your Bible, make it a habit to first ask God to point out areas in your life where your flesh is still in control. Take a cue from King David when he prayed:

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*Search me, God, and know my heart. Try me, and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.*⁶⁵

...and then listen to what the Spirit has to say.

As you spend time in God's word, you'll read about various people who did right or wrong. You'll come across commands and instructions on how you are to live. Examine yourself in light of what you read. Be honest. Maybe you have a pride, anger, lust or other problem that you're unaware of. Keep asking God to reveal those areas to you. Then, don't be surprised when the Holy Spirit starts convicting you of things in your life you've never had a problem with before. He will probably make you very uncomfortable at times, especially as you compare yourself with the One you follow: your Lord Jesus Christ. That's okay. Let Him bring those areas to light anyway so He can deal with them. You will only have victory when you stop holding on to what grieves the Holy Spirit.⁶⁶

As the Spirit brings each of these flesh areas to light, confess them to Jesus right away and they will be forgiven. Confess not only sinful actions, but also the fleshly attitude, the root cause, that led to them. For example, confess the lack of love that led to your outburst of anger, or the selfishness that caused you to walk away from someone in need. Even if a fleshly attitude does not result in a sinful action, confess it anyway. As you keep confessing the works and attitudes of your flesh, not only will they be forgiven, God promises to cleanse you practically from *all* unrighteousness: He promises to sanctify you.

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*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us the sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*⁶⁷

When you confess these things to God, don't forget to ask His Holy Spirit for the boldness and power to put the works of your flesh completely to death (Romans 8:13). Confess not only your weakness but also His strength, and by faith expect Him to answer your prayer.

Then, look to Jesus, and keep looking at Him. Ask God to show you more of Jesus as you spend time reading your Bible. Think about who He is and what He has done throughout the day. Look to Him more than you look at yourself. The more you fix your eyes on Jesus, the more the Holy Spirit transforms you into His image.

As you learn to walk more in the Spirit, and by His power put the works of your flesh to death, you will find sin losing its grip on your life. Romans 6 will no longer appear to be full of impossibilities.⁶⁸ You will find yourself able to 'reckon' yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.⁶⁹ You will also be able to boldly 'present' yourself by faith to God each day for Him to work through you.

*Neither present your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. ...I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh, for as you presented your members as servants to uncleanness and to wickedness upon wickedness, even so now present your members as servants to righteousness for sanctification.*⁷⁰

This 'presenting' of yourself is not about your ability to live in a righteous manner, but about your *availability* to God for Him to do

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His good work in and through you. It is saying, “*God, I come before you as an empty vessel. Fill me with your righteousness for Your glory. Work through me today as You see fit.*” I recently began a habit of starting my day by presenting myself to God in this way. As a result, I’ve noticed God working in and through me during the day. I think you’ll discover the same when you present yourself to Him each morning.

In case we didn’t get it the first time, Paul repeats his instruction in Romans chapter 12:

*Therefore I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. Don’t be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what is the good, well-pleasing, and perfect will of God.*⁷¹

The word ‘transformed’ refers to God’s work in making us like Christ, not our work in reforming ourselves.⁷² All we have to do is offer ourselves to Him daily, and He in His mercy will do His sanctifying work in us. You don’t have to understand how He works. All you need to do is trust Him to do His work. Spurgeon put it this way:

“I cannot make this change,” says one. Who said you could? The Scripture which we have quoted speaks not of what man will do, but of what God will do. It is God’s promise, and it is for Him to fulfill His own engagements. Trust in Him to fulfill His Word to you, and it will be done.

“But how is it to be done?” What business is that of yours? Must the Lord explain His methods before you will

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believe him? The Lord's working in this matter is a great mystery: the Holy Ghost performs it.⁷³

The normal Christian life is one that relies on the grace of God in all areas, and I believe the chief means of that grace for day-to-day living is the Holy Spirit. It matters not how weak you are—His grace is always sufficient for you. So strive to walk in the Spirit. Cling to Him as if your life depends on it, because, as far as your sanctification is concerned, it does.⁷⁴ While your salvation is assured in Christ, your life here on earth will only be fruitful as you walk in the Spirit.

First Steps Summary

1. Build your thirst for the Holy Spirit by...
 - a. examining yourself in the light of scripture,
 - b. asking God to reveal your fleshly nature to you,
 - c. realizing your powerlessness to overcome the flesh, and
 - d. realizing the sufficiency of His Spirit to overcome the flesh.⁷⁵
2. Confess to God your fleshly nature and its works (i.e. sins)...
 - a. immediately,
 - b. specifically, and
 - c. completely.
3. Confess God's power and ask⁷⁶ Him...
 - a. for power to put the fleshly nature to death, and
 - b. to make you like Christ.
4. Trust God to answer this prayer by...
 - a. reckoning yourself dead to sin and alive to righteousness,
 - b. presenting yourself to God daily, and
 - c. looking steadfastly to Jesus.

Continuing On

We've seen what the Bible says about our fleshly nature, and about our need for the Holy Spirit to transform us on the inside so we can resist temptation. We are told in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that God always provides a way of escape from temptation.⁷⁷ I firmly

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believe that way of escape comes through the power of the Holy Spirit, whether the temptation appears easy or difficult to resist.

Satan's goal in tempting you is to separate you from the life of the Holy Spirit. (Thank God, he can do nothing about separating you from Christ!) He does so by trying to get you to rely on your own strength and willpower. He will tell you, "You can handle this temptation on your own." Don't listen to him! Keep relying 100 percent on the Holy Spirit!

If you do fall and sin, Satan will tell you, "Now you did it! God won't have anything to do with you." Again, don't listen to him. Immediately confess your sin to God, thank Him for the blood of Jesus that covers it, and get back into step with the Holy Spirit. It's a lie of Satan that you have to wait a while for God's anger to cool down before He'll accept you again. Your standing before God is entirely on the merits of the righteous blood of Jesus Christ. Period.

Of course, the Holy Spirit is more than just a means to help you live right. The indwelling of the third Person of the Trinity means real fellowship with God is always available.⁷⁸ The Christian life is a walk with God through easy times and difficult times.

If you are in Christ, you already have the Holy Spirit, but don't be satisfied with just *having* the Spirit. The benefits of such a relationship are known through *walking* in Him.⁷⁹ Yes, it takes time to learn how to walk, but stick with it. Spend time in your Bible getting familiar with His voice. The more you rely on the Holy Spirit to make you like Christ, the more precious your walk with Him will be.

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One more thing: If you have not been born again, then none of this information will do you any good because you don't have the Holy Spirit. (The converse is also true: if you don't have the Holy Spirit, then you have not been born again.) When God saves someone, He gives him His Holy Spirit as an assured promise of salvation.⁸⁰ If you don't have the promise (the guarantee), then you aren't saved:

*...But if any man doesn't have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his.*⁸¹

So your first priority is getting right with God so that He can send you His Holy Spirit. Humbly surrender yourself before God, confessing your sin against Him, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ who died to pay the penalty for your sins, and you will be saved. And you will receive the Holy Spirit.⁸²

"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"⁸³

*May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely.
May your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved
blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
He who calls you is faithful, who will also do it.⁸⁴*

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory in great joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.⁸⁵

Now may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of an eternal covenant, our Lord Jesus, make you complete in every good

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work *to do his will*, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, *through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*⁸⁶

Fitted to Christ—A Parable

I walk with a limp.

No, I wasn't injured. And I don't have a birth defect. But to explain, I need to repeat a story I found floating around on the internet.⁸⁷

It seems that a man had gone to the tailor to have a suit made cheaply, but when the suit was finished and he went to try it on, it didn't fit him at all. Complaining that the jacket was too big in back, the right arm was too long, one pant leg was too short and three buttons were missing, the man was justifiably upset.

"No problem," said the tailor. "Just hunch your back, bend your arm, walk with a limp, and stick your fingers through the button holes and you'll look just fine!" The man contorted his body to fit the suit, and feeling duped by the tailor he left. He had not walked one block when he was approached by a stranger.

"Who made that suit for you?" asked the stranger. "I'm in the market for a new suit myself."

Surprised, but pleased at the compliment, the man pointed out the tailor's shop.

"Well, thanks very much," said the stranger, hurrying off. "I do believe I'll go to that tailor for my suit. Why, he must be a genius to fit a cripple like you!"

While the story is funny, I see a parable we can learn something from.

For much of our lives we were living in the poorly-made clothes of sin. They didn't cover us very well, but they fit us perfectly as far as we were concerned, with our hunched backs, bent arms, fingers through button holes and limping walk. They were comfortable, and we told ourselves we looked just fine. We didn't know any better, and we couldn't or wouldn't have done anything about it if we did.

Then God saved us. He opened our eyes to see our true spiritual condition, and gave us new, perfectly healthy bodies with which to serve Him. Those old sinful rags were useless, so God gave us garments of righteousness to go with our new bodies and told us to put them on:

*...put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, for its lusts.*⁸⁸

We looked at our new clothes with amazement: the backs didn't have a bulge, both arms and legs were the right size, none of the buttons were missing, and they covered us perfectly. We didn't deserve this, but we were most thankful to the Tailor for providing us with such wonderful and righteous attire.

However, many of us discovered problems the moment we first put on our new garment. We found for some reason the back is too tight, the arms and legs don't feel the right length, the suit chafes in some areas and limits movement in others. Simply put, it's very uncomfortable to wear. (To tell the truth, some of us have even toyed with the idea of going back to those old, comfortable rags.)

What gives?

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The problem is not with the suit. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only perfect garment for us, and wear Him we must if we want to appear presentable before God. The problem is how we fit into Christ.

We still have habits of spiritually bad posture. Our new clothes were not made to walk hunchback or with fingers through holes...in other words, to live in the sinful ways of our old life. So when we thoughtlessly or stubbornly walk like we've walked in the past, the suit chafes and binds, and seems like a very poor fit.

God won't tailor the suit to fit us. Instead, He uses His Holy Spirit to fit us to the suit—to conform us to Christ. He teaches us and enables us to stand up straight, and to walk the way we were intended to walk: righteously.

But, just as in the earlier story where the man had to 'submit' himself to fit into his suit, we have to submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit who is tailoring us—transforming us—to fit into Christ.

The more we submit to the Holy Spirit's tailoring, the better we'll find the new suit to be...much better than our old rags. As we walk upright in humility and love, the garment of Christ will become the easiest and most comfortable clothes we'll ever wear.

And this is what I'm discovering. The garment of Christ gets more and more wearable and comfortable as the Holy Spirit works on my spiritual posture. Oh, it still binds and feels unpleasant at times, but that's because I still walk with a bit of a limp. Yes, old habits die hard.

Don't lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, who is being renewed in knowledge after the image of his Creator, ...⁸⁹

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For whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...⁹⁰

But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord, the Spirit.⁹¹

The Examination of the Scriptures

*Search me, God, and know my heart. Try me, and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.*⁹²

It is good to take time to regularly examine the Bible, but it is far better to let the Bible take time to regularly examine us. The former gives us knowledge of the scriptures that can puff us up. The latter gives us knowledge of ourselves that humbles us, opening the door to repentance and the building-up that is of God. The former happens as we read and study the scriptures. The latter happens afterwards as we take time to meditate on what we have read and studied.

The Bible is not a religious textbook or doctrinal repository. It is the word of God: living, active, and powerful. It has the power to probe our minds, our hearts, our inmost being (Hebrews 4:12). But the benefit is only experienced by those who submit to its scrutiny.

The examination of the scriptures is usually painful. Knowing this, I don't let God's word examine me as often as I should. I expect this is due to fear of what will be revealed. A phrase from *The Neverending Story* comes to mind: "Confronted by their true selves, most men run away, screaming!"

I already know there's bad stuff deep inside me, but I'm comfortable keeping this knowledge as general or theoretical as can be. I don't want to be confronted with the specifics. However, avoiding the doctor for fear of his diagnosis of cancer will do serious

harm if there really is cancer. There can be no cure without there first being a diagnosis.

Regardless of how God's word makes me feel, it is always a good thing to submit to His probing of the deeper recesses of my heart. How else can those fleshly strongholds I'm only vaguely aware of be fully revealed in all their ugliness and torn down? It is those very areas that have hindered my walk with the Lord since I've known Him. Why should I let them continue to obstruct God's will for me?

I'd like to share a few of these painful, probing scripture passages that have been on my mind lately. You will probably find them very familiar and not painful at all, especially if you just give them a quick read-through and forget about them. But the more I let them examine me, the clearer I see the true condition of my heart. I find myself becoming more desperate for the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to work in me God's cure.

Love of the World or Love of the Father?

Don't love the world, neither the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the Father's love isn't in him.⁹³

I like to think I don't love the world—at least not in the bad way. But when it comes down to specifics, there are some things in the world I do find attractive and pleasing: certain foods, books, songs, movies, TV shows, jokes, philosophies...roller coasters.

But Jesus presented an exclusive choice. I can either love the world, or I can love God. *I can't do both.* I don't even have the option of loving the world less than God. I am not to love the world *at all.* (I'm talking love here, not the mere use of the world's

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things. We can't isolate ourselves from the world. We have to be in the world, but not of it...just as Jesus was.)

Of course, it's easy to say, "I love God and not the world," but what do my actions show? What kinds of thoughts do I find pleasing? What motivates me? What would I rather spend my time doing? If I examine myself according to my thoughts and actions, will I find I love the Father or hate Him?

Thorns or Fruit?

*"Others fell among thorns. The thorns grew up and choked them. ...this is he who hears the word, but the cares of this age and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful."*⁹⁴

These words of Jesus are frequently on my mind. The "cares of the world" and the "deceitfulness of riches" are the things that the world is concerned about: food, clothing, family, employment, a good retirement, entertainment, comfort, pleasure, happiness. These are not evil in themselves, but they become evil when they form the basis of my goals, desires and motivations. This happens all too often, and when it does, Jesus ends up taking the backseat in my life. I then find it more difficult to hear Him speak to me. This hinders my growth in Christ to the point where it becomes impossible to bear fruit.

The fruit that love of the world prevents is the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16–24), which is headed up with love. So love of the world prevents the love of the Spirit. If I allow the world to attract me, I shouldn't wonder that I'm not making progress in loving my enemies, growing in patience toward those who irritate me, growing in my relationship with the Lord, and so on.

What thorns have I allowed, and even now am allowing and nurturing, in my life? (It's time to do an inventory!) The cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches are the number one cause for stunted spiritual growth. God only knows how much spiritual fruit I've already dropped prematurely due to the thorns in my life!

Sowing to My Flesh or Sowing to the Spirit?

Don't be deceived. God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.⁹⁵

As any farmer knows, if you want to harvest wheat, you must sow wheat. You can't sow one thing and expect something else to crop up. This God-given law has been in effect since the beginning of creation and it can't be circumvented.

For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption. But he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.⁹⁶

Another sure God-given law is presented in this passage. I can sow to my flesh, or I can sow to the Holy Spirit. Which one I sow to determines what I reap. It matters not what I intend to reap, desire to reap, or think I will reap. If I sow to my fleshly desires, I will reap corruption. If I sow to the Spirit's desires, I will reap eternal life—which is the kind of life, not just its length. I believe there is no way around this; it is just as sure as the law the farmer relies on.

When it comes down to it, sowing to the flesh is no different than sowing thorns. So why do I still sow to my flesh at times? I don't know. I may do many good things for the right reasons, but

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if I also cater to my fleshly desires, why should I expect a good harvest?

Thorns are whatever I do that hinders the life and work of the Holy Spirit in me, and they must be dealt with right away. Thorns start out seemingly innocent enough, but as time goes on, they grow harder and become more entrenched—more difficult and painful to pull up. I must pull them up anyway by denying myself in those areas that grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30), and I must sow to the Spirit instead.

Appearances or Fruit?

“Remain in me, and I in you. As the branch can’t bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you, unless you remain in me. I am the vine. You are the branches. He who remains in me, and I in him, the same bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”⁹⁷

Jesus’ words search me in various ways here:

As one branch connected to the Vine, I desire to look good, with lots of healthy green leaves. But God is not concerned with looks. He did not plant the Vine for decoration but for fruit. Am I concerned with appearances, or the goal at hand?

Assuming I desire fruit, why do I desire it? The Father placed me in Christ so that I would bear much fruit *for Him*. Is my desire to satisfy myself or get the admiration of others, or is it simply to satisfy God?

Twice Jesus stated the absolute necessity of abiding in Him to produce fruit. I can do nothing without Him. But do I really

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believe this? How essential do I view my connection to Christ for hour-by-hour living?

Awareness of my need to abide in Christ is good, but am I really abiding in Him? It is very easy to fool myself here. Abiding in Christ is not just listening to Him or agreeing with Him, but doing what He says. Do I do what He says?

Post-Examination Action

But be doers of the word, and not only hearers, deluding your own selves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man looking at his natural face in a mirror; for he sees himself, and goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. ...⁹⁸

The word of God provides a thorough examination of the heart. If we were graded on the results of our examination, most of us (myself included) would not even receive a C-. And the few who have A's or B's probably wouldn't be aware of it anyway.

But even with a failing grade, this examination is a good thing if it leads us to call out to God for the grace of a lasting change of heart, mind, and actions.

Without this change, the examination is useless. It is like someone who looks in a mirror, and then leaves, forgetting what he looks like. This is a believer whose Christianity is relegated to a limited portion of his life: Sunday mornings, a devotional reading, or the occasional prayer. Jesus Christ is something added to life, rather than what life is all about. There is no continual meditation and communion with the Father and the Son. There is no fellowship of the Spirit. There is little difference between that person and the world.

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This is a man who has fooled himself, and is probably plagued with doubts. I do not want to be this man.

“Everyone therefore who hears these words of mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man, ... Everyone who hears these words of mine, and doesn't do them will be like a foolish man, ...”⁹⁹

The way out of self-deception and into real, tangible, spiritual union with Jesus is to act on what He says. I can be both a doctrinal genius and a fool at the same time if I don't obey my Lord.

The examination continues, but the time for action is now. Let us examine ourselves closely, grit our teeth, and through the power of the Holy Spirit painfully pull out all the thorns in our lives, living only for the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.¹⁰⁰

Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path.¹⁰¹

Examine me, Yahweh, and prove me.

Try my heart and my mind.¹⁰²

The Catwalk

In the clothing industry, big name fashion designers show off their latest designs at fashion shows. Each model wears the designer's clothes and walks up and down a catwalk, surrounded by photographers and other onlookers. This is so they can see how the clothing looks and fits as the model moves and poses.

Not too long ago, I thought of a strange twist on this. I'm a down-to-earth guy who's not so much interested in form as function. I'd rather see how useful the clothing is than how it looks. (My wife would rather I be otherwise.) So I wondered how typical designer fashions would fare in real-world conditions. My idea is to have a fashion show with powerful fans blowing lots of cold air, rain, and snow on the models. I want to see how well the fashions perform in really bad weather. After all, I don't want to wear something that can't handle the real world!

Okay, it's a stupid idea...even if it would make for a cool LL Bean outerwear commercial. But, I am going somewhere with this.

*But put on the Lord Jesus Christ...*¹⁰³

When Paul told us to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, he used a picture of putting on clothing. I usually take this to mean I need to put on Christ for the personal benefit of my day-to-day living in the world. But recently it occurred to me that we Christians are also to be like fashion show models, walking up and down the catwalk for all the world to see. Like those models, our job is to

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draw attention to what we're wearing, and not to ourselves. We're displaying the Lord Jesus Christ.

In order to do that, before we get into the spotlight, we have to take all our raggedy old clothes off, and then put on the Designer's clothes exclusively (Colossians 3:5–11). We're here to showcase Jesus, and Him only. Everything else is a distraction. We can't even prideful strut about, because all the glory must go to the Designer, not the models.

This show we're in is not like any earthly fashion show or beauty pageant. It runs 24 hours a day for the rest of our lives. Instead of photographers and fans of the Designer, we're surrounded by His competitors—His enemies. They don't want Jesus to look good, so they throw mud and all kinds of nasty stuff at us. When we get hit, we mustn't take it personally. After all, it's not us they hate; it's our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so the show goes on. But because we're wearing Christ, we don't respond in kind. When they curse, we bless (Luke 6:28). When they abuse us, we intercede for them. When they hate us, we show love to them. (The garment of Christ enables us to do this.) And after all is said and done, the clothing of Christ is no worse for wear. He wears well no matter what we've been through!

Why Perfection is Delayed

*Beloved, I beg you as foreigners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.*¹⁰⁴

You've been a Christian for a while now — years, maybe decades. At times you've found yourself longing for a perfect heart, one where you continually live in the Spirit, you're unfazed by temptation, you never have to struggle with the flesh, and where it's a joy to always obey God immediately because you love Him so much.

You know God wants you to be holy (1 Peter 1:15), but sometimes you wonder why He doesn't make you perfect right now. You know when you reach eternity God will have completely removed your sin nature, but why not now? What purpose does the never-ending struggle with the flesh serve?

The answer is that God wants to teach you something you can't learn apart from this struggle. He wants to teach you to submit to Him based on His authority alone.

Think about it. If you were perfect, if it were always a pleasure to obey God, then your obedience would be due to love (which is a good thing), but not necessarily due to His authority over you. If you do right because you always want to do right, you'll never learn to do right just because God says so.

Now I know for many of you this sounds contrary to what you've been striving for, but it's not. I truly want to obey God more and more because I want to — because I love Him. But there

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will still be times when God tells me to do something I don't want to do. I must also obey Him in those times. Even Jesus obeyed when faced with something that was a horror to Him.

*"Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."*¹⁰⁵

God does not make us practically holy right away. Life is a battle between the flesh and the Spirit, and this internal conflict will continue to our last breath. It is necessary to teach us to humbly submit ourselves before our God.

The next time you struggle with temptation, take it as an opportunity to submit to God anyway, just because He wants you to—because He deserves it!

*...though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered...*¹⁰⁶

How Powerful is Your God?

All believers have a limited idea of what God is capable of doing. We may say He can do anything, but we still have unspoken reservations in some areas. Yes, God can heal the sick and raise the dead. He can part the seas and move mountains. He not only created the sun, which is incomparably more powerful than our biggest nuclear bomb, He filled the universe with hundreds of trillions of suns, all without breaking a sweat. His power is truly incomprehensible.

And yet, when it comes to His work in our lives, there are some things we think He must have a difficult time doing. His purpose is to transform us into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ¹⁰⁷, but why does it seem such a struggle, and with so many setbacks?

The truth is that many of us unconsciously think God's power is limited by our limitations. Sure, God has had some success with a few "super saints," but, for the majority of us, bringing us closer to Christ must really tax God's strength and patience. After all, many of us have been believers for a long time, and yet that old sin nature keeps raising its ugly head and making its presence known.

But God is still able to do what you and I think is impossible, even transforming our lives from the inside out. The well-known story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18:21–39 illustrates this point very well.

After the false prophets called upon Baal to send down fire on their sacrificial offering (...with no results, by the way), Elijah rebuilt his altar, dug a trench around it, and laid on the wood and

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sacrifice. Then he poured twelve barrels of water over everything until the trench remained full. He then called on God to glorify Himself:

“Hear me, Yahweh, hear me, that this people may know that you, Yahweh, are God, and that you have turned their heart back again.” Then the fire of Yahweh fell, and consumed the burnt offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.¹⁰⁸

God’s power was strong enough to do what most thought was impossible, easily overcoming Elijah’s apparent act of making it difficult for God to light the fire. This small but very impressive show of God’s power has practical significance for you.

Think of that sacrifice as your life, and all the water poured on it as those sins and weaknesses you think prevents God from doing a great work in your life. You certainly can’t light the fire...not at least until the wood dries out. And that’s your problem: you’ve tried and tried, but you can’t stop pouring water on the whole thing. Your sins and weaknesses are always manifesting themselves, constantly keeping the wood soaking wet. But what is a big problem in your eyes is nothing to God. You don’t have to light the fire. That is God’s job, and He can do it no matter how damp the wood.

If you’re asking yourself why He hasn’t done so, perhaps you need to examine your altar. What does God have to work with? What have you given Him? Is it only a portion of your life? Or perhaps there’s nothing there at all. God is not going to send fire down on an empty altar.

How Powerful is Your God?

For God to bless your whole life and to make your whole life a blessing to others, you need to offer your whole life to God. Biblical sacrifice is surrender. It is irrevocably giving your best over to God so you can no longer benefit by it, unless He gives it back. Whatever you hold back for yourself, whether it be material things, your finances, attitudes, relationships, desires, will, rights, time, or anything else, God is not going to bless, and this is going to end up holding you back spiritually. You need to give your all to God.

*Therefore I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service.*¹⁰⁹

Thank God we're called to be *living* sacrifices, not crispy critters. But as Walter Martin used to say, the trouble with living sacrifices is that they keep trying to crawl off the altar. It requires conscious effort to stay on the altar daily.

Examine your life. What have you been holding back on? Has God asked you to do something that you are not willing to do? Are you seeking glory for yourself in some area? Is there some sin, habit or thought that you are not willing to give over to Him? It could be anything. If it is not on the altar, don't expect God's blessing.

But when your all is on the altar, expect great things from God. His power is infinitely greater than your sin nature. He is not limited by you, only by what you give Him to work with. The more areas of your life that you cease holding on to and give to God, the more Christ-like you will become, and the more God's

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glory will show through you. God is not limited by your limitations.

Yokes

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart; and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”¹¹⁰

I once heard someone put what Jesus said this way. It is like an advertising slogan that the carpenter’s son put on a sign outside of His shop: “Jesus Christ’s Easy Yokes.”

You may think of a yoke as a big wooden contraption that is placed on the neck of oxen to harness them to do work. You may think of a yoke as work, but it is actually something designed to make work much easier. In some countries people bear a yoke, a stick, across their shoulders to help them balance and carry heavy loads that would be impossible otherwise. The yoke is not the burden, but it makes carrying burdens easier.

Jesus tells you to put on His yoke of ease, and with that yoke to carry His light burden. This is the only way to find rest for your soul. If you find things are getting spiritually unbearable, check the following:

- Do you have the burden Jesus gave you, or did you pick up some other heavy load elsewhere? Why not trade loads? Give Jesus your heavy one and you take His light one.
- Are you using His yoke, or are you trying to carry your burden with some cheaply made imitation that is hard, chafes, and does nothing to help you carry the burden? Perhaps you’re even trying bareback?

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- Are you using His yoke properly? A yoke is worn by a servant, so it must be worn with humility. Our Master took on the form of a servant and served His heavenly Father by humbly serving us. He now offers you the same yoke He carried.

The Wrong Yokes

Don't be unequally yoked with unbelievers, for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?¹¹¹

Now therefore why do you tempt God, that you should put a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?¹¹²

Stand firm therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and don't be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.¹¹³

The Right Yokes¹¹⁴

Let as many as are bondservants under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and the doctrine not be blasphemed. Those who have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brothers, but rather let them serve them, because those who partake of the benefit are believing and beloved. Teach and exhort these things.¹¹⁵

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. His commandments are not grievous.¹¹⁶

The Lord Who Loves Us

“You are my friends if you do what I command you.”

Jesus

How does what Jesus said sit with you? Are you okay with a friend who makes demands? ...whose friendship is a condition based on submission to Him? Is that true friendship? Is it love?

I'll admit, I've had difficulty understanding what Jesus said here. It appears His love is conditional, offered on the basis of works. I have to earn His favor somehow, or He won't be my friend. This doesn't fit in with my understanding of Jesus from other parts of the Bible.

If you've had problems with what Jesus said here, it's time to take another look. Here it is in context:

“If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and remain in his love. I have spoken these things to you, that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be made full. This is my commandment, that you love one another, even as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant doesn't know what his lord does. But I have called you friends, for everything that I heard from my Father, I have made known to you.”¹¹⁷

Here are some things I see:

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First, even though Jesus had already loved His disciples (and they Him), He did not begin calling them His friends until this time. He was known to them as Master first. They called Him Lord.

I think we get into trouble when we begin with Jesus as Friend, and then later try to add 'Lord' to the relationship. When a friend starts making demands, the friendship doesn't get stronger, it gets weaker, strained.

But if we begin with Jesus as Lord, recognizing His right over us, and we submit to Him, then, when we realize He is also our closest Friend, instead of becoming weaker, the bond grows stronger. We have a Master who loves us and always seeks our wellbeing. His commands are not burdensome, but good and beneficial.

Don't think of Jesus as a friend who is trying to get power over you. Think of Him as the One who already has rights over you, and yet is your best friend.

Second, verse 14 is not about Jesus' love for me, but my love for Him. Jesus did not tell His disciples, "I am your friend if..." He said, "You are my friends if..." He declared His friendship in verse 15: "I have called you friends." Shortly thereafter, He proved it by dying for them (vs. 13).

Jesus already loves us. He died for us when we were ungodly.¹¹⁸ The question is do we love Him in return? Are we His friends in practice? Are we living in His love?

The command Jesus wants us to keep is simple and modest: to love one another (vs. 12). It is a command that should be easy to keep, and yet we find it difficult because it involves the denial of

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self—even to the point of laying down our lives. How can we keep this command as Jesus wants us to? Through the love of the Spirit.

“If you love me, keep my commandments.”¹¹⁹

The Work of the Holy Spirit

Introduction

How can we identify the work of the Holy Spirit? What sets the Spirit's work apart from the work of man or a deceiving spirit? What makes the Holy Spirit's work unique? These are important questions for today's believer.

Much supernatural activity goes on in churches that is assumed to be of God, but is it? Here are a few examples. As you read them, ask yourself, "Do these describe the work of the Holy Spirit? How can I tell?"

- News item: NEGLIGENCE—"Act of God" Defense, The Supreme Court of Louisiana has refused to allow application of the "Act of God" defense in a personal injury suit brought by one worshiper against another on allegations that defendant ran into plaintiff while plaintiff was in the aisle of a church praying. Defendant had contended that she was "trotting under the Spirit of the Lord" when the accident occurred.¹²⁰
- Classified ad: DIVINE HEALING, lay on of the hands, by appointment only, Tuesday and Wednesday, 12–8PM.¹²¹
- An audio series called *The Holy Spirit In You* teaches you "how to put the awesome power of God's Holy Spirit to work as effectively as the disciples did in the First Century Church."
- A popular video series called the Alpha Course presents the gospel and basic Christian lifestyle to non-believers. It has

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been endorsed by many well-known evangelists, pastors and church denominations. The course also promotes as from the Holy Spirit such manifestations as uncontrollable laughter, shaking, and animal noises.

If you came to a conclusion on any of these examples, can you give a good biblical reason for your conclusion? It should be easy for us believers to know what is of God because we have the Spirit living inside us. But sadly, many of us feel a work is of the Holy Spirit even when that work goes counter to how the Bible tells us the Holy Spirit works.

The point of this article is to show you how you can recognize the Spirit's work so you can distinguish it from man's or Satan's work. While I am going to focus a lot on spiritual gifts in this article, what I have to say applies to all areas of the Spirit's work.¹²²

Spiritual Gifts—A Different Approach

The church today tends to approach the subject of spiritual gifts in one of two different ways. Charismatic churches teach that the Holy Spirit still gives miraculous sign gifts to believers just as in the early church. Non-charismatic churches teach that miraculous gifts ceased early on because they were only to help the church get started. Both sides have some pretty convincing arguments to prove their position. Both have scriptures to back up what they believe, but obviously both can't be right. If you bring them together to share their viewpoints, the discussion usually blows up into a verbal battle that doesn't change anyone's mind.

While I have my opinion on this subject, in this article I'm not going to take sides. I'm not going to say whether such-and-such a

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gift is for today or not, or say which supernatural manifestations are of God and which are not. That is not my purpose for writing this. Instead, I want to show you how you can know if any specific work is of God. Then you can apply what you have learned to see for yourself if a particular gift or manifestation is of God or not.

One of the reasons that dialog between charismatics and non-charismatics is so difficult is that each of us tend to focus on our own 'pet' doctrines. The problem is that we tend to study only the parts of the Bible that confirm what we already believe. This is a type of self-deception. When we study the Bible, we need to study all of it, and not make excuses for the parts we don't agree with.

*He who pleads his cause first seems right; until another comes and questions him.*¹²³

This proverb is a picture of a legal court proceeding. The defendant and the prosecutor will each put forth only the evidence that supports their side of the case. If you listen to only one side, you may not find the truth of the matter. But, by listening to both sides, you can weigh the evidence and come to an understanding of the truth.

When I study the Bible, especially about something controversial, I try to set aside my own biases. This is hard to do because I'm not always aware of my biases. Listening to various viewpoints helps me become aware of them, but what I believe must not be determined by the best sounding argument, but by what the Bible says as a whole.

As far as miraculous spiritual gifts are concerned, I've come to the conclusion that the question of whether they are for today or not is irrelevant. Instead, we should be focusing on the character

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and nature of God, who is the Giver of the gifts, so we can tell on an instance by instance basis if any specific work is of God. Paul said:

Now there are various kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are various kinds of service, and the same Lord. There are various kinds of workings, but the same God, who works all things in all. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the profit of all. For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom, and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit; to another faith, by the same Spirit; and to another gifts of healings, by the same Spirit; and to another workings of miracles; and to another prophecy; and to another discerning of spirits; to another different kinds of languages; and to another the interpretation of languages. But the one and the same Spirit works all of these, distributing to each one separately as he desires.¹²⁴

The key words in this passage are the last three: “as He desires.” The gifts we received when God saved us were given at His discretion. We had no say in the matter. When I first trusted in Christ, God did not ask me what gift I would like. And I did not say, “Well, Lord, I’m going to go to a Baptist church, and they don’t believe the gift of tongues is for today, so please don’t give me that gift.” That would have been silly! If the gift isn’t for today, what do I have to worry about?—God won’t give it. But if it is for today, who am I to tell God what to do? Likewise, I did not say, “Since I’m going to go to a Pentecostal church, please give me the gift of healing.” That would have been equally as silly for the same reason. No, God decided which gift He wanted me to have. He

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gave me the gift I needed for the area He wanted me to minister in. Any other gift would have limited God's work through me.

To put it simply, if a gift is for today, then we will see God give it. If it is not for today, then we won't see God give it. This is a statement I think both sides can agree on.

The Problem with Pragmatism

At this point there are some who will say, "So, miraculous gifts are for today because there are believers who practice them." But it's not that simple. Just because someone is doing something miraculous doesn't mean it is of God, even if it is a believer who is doing it. John warned us:

*Beloved, don't believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*¹²⁵

The reason he warned us is because we can be deceived.

In the Old Testament, the Israelites were instructed to test the prophets. Deuteronomy 13 details how they were to know if a prophet was truly sent from God:

*If there arise in the midst of you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and he give you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, "Let us go after other gods" (which you have not known) "and let us serve them;" you shall not listen to the words of that prophet, or to that dreamer of dreams: for Yahweh your God proves you, to know whether you love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*¹²⁶

Notice that the test had nothing to do with whether a miracle had really happened. Real or not, the people were not to listen to

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the prophet who led them away from God to serve other “gods.” They were to obey God as He had already revealed Himself, and one of the ways He had done so was with the command, “You shall have no other gods before me.”¹²⁷

God isn’t the only one who works miracles in this world. God also permits Satan to do some pretty amazing things. When Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and it became a snake, Pharaoh’s magicians did the same thing and their staffs also became snakes.¹²⁸ The same is true today. Satan can and still does work false signs and wonders for the purpose of leading us astray.¹²⁹

When we become believers, we don’t suddenly know all that is of God and all that isn’t. We are not given perfect understanding of all things spiritual. Just like the Israelites in the Old Testament, New Testament believers were also instructed to test the prophets. In the early church, when someone prophesied, those who listened were not to blindly accept what they heard, but were to listen with a discriminating ear to see if what was said was really of the Holy Spirit, or was of a deceiving spirit:

*Let the prophets speak, two or three, and let the others discern.*¹³⁰

A quick reading of this verse makes it appear that all Paul is doing is limiting the number of those who prophesy in church to three, and instructing those who listen to pay close attention because they might learn something. But Paul is actually giving the listeners a big responsibility. The Greek word translated “discern” is *diakrino*, which means to try, to learn by discrimination, to decide. The New King James Version of the Bible translates this same word as:

- Discern (Matthew 16:3, 1 Corinthians 11:29)

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- Judge (1 Corinthians 6:5, 11:31, 14:29)
- Make distinction (Acts 15:9, Jude 1:22)
- Show partiality (James 2:4)
- Waver (Romans 4:20)
- Differ (1 Corinthians 4:7)
- Doubt (Matthew 21:21, Mark 11:23, Acts 10:20, 11:12, Romans 14:23, James 1:6)
- Contend (Acts 11:2, Jude 1:9)

What a responsibility! Paul is telling believers to test prophecies. We are to discern, judge, and even doubt the message if it shows signs of not being from God.

Testing is scriptural. The Ephesian church was commended for testing those who were called apostles, and they found they were not.¹³¹ The Bereans were commended for testing the teachings of the apostle Paul, and they found his teachings were true.¹³² Paul told us to “test all things.”¹³³ Without testing, we can be led astray.

In 1994, Jill Barnes¹³⁴ heard about a church meeting where people were on the floor “laughing their heads off.” Some shared about how God had revealed things in their lives that displeased Him. Others said they felt drunk.

After hearing a friend talk about a meeting where she had gone forward for prayer, and then fell down and shook from head to toe, Jill became curious enough to go with her.

At the meeting, the pastor gave a message, after which there was an invitation to come forward for prayer. Jill went forward. Someone put a hand over her head and she felt a bit dizzy. She noticed others were falling to the floor around her. Wanting to be touched by God, Jill let herself fall back. She felt what she later

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described as a “horrible, uncomfortable, heavy, oppressive feeling” go over her head and down her body. Her hands were clenched together, but she couldn’t relax or unlock them from each other. Scary, yes. But Jill thought this was of God. Eventually the meeting came to an end and she went home.

A few days later, the heavy, uncomfortable feeling came back and Jill went to bed terrified. Soon after, she started hearing voices that said, “Now you’re free! Now you don’t have any problems!” Then the voices said, “Kill yourself! Jesus isn’t real! The Old Testament is real, but Jesus wasn’t the Savior! You’ve got to look again, and find out where and who the Savior really is!”

By this time Jill knew this was demonic oppression. She eventually came out of her oppression with God’s help, and that of friends, through prayer, in-depth Bible reading, and obedience to what she found there. But what happened to her can happen to any one of us who fails to recognize how the Holy Spirit works.

Biblical Testing

The Bible tells us to test the spirits. This implies that there is a method of testing—a standard by which we can know if a message or sign is truly of God.

Many Christians feel uncomfortable with the idea of testing God, and well they should. The Bible says we are not to tempt God.¹³⁵ But I am not talking about tempting God. When you know God is telling you to do something, there is only one thing you must do: obey. But not every spiritual manifestation is of God, and we need to recognize that. We are not to blindly accept all supernatural events as from the Holy Spirit.

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So how can we know? What is this measuring stick by which we can test spiritual manifestations? Does it really exist? Can we really know if a message or sign is truly of God? I believe we can.

First, while the Holy Spirit can manifest Himself through physically miraculous means, His work is not identified through a particular outward act or manifestation. Satan has power in this world to cause miracles that look on the surface very much like the work of the Holy Spirit. For example, what we know of today as the gift of tongues or glossolalia (speaking in an unknown language), also occurs in some eastern religions and cults. The Way International, which denies that Jesus is God, practices glossolalia. So did the Heaven's Gate cult whose mass suicide in 1997 made the headlines years ago. There is even some evidence that much of this practice is not even supernatural. An article in the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*¹³⁶ told of an experiment where 20% of the participants spoke in tongues (unknown languages) immediately after listening to a tape recording of genuine glossolalia. With some further training, the number increased to 70%. Whether this is a valid gift of the Spirit or not, it cannot be relied on as evidence that God is at work. No outward physical manifestation can.

Second, the Holy Spirit's work is not identified through a particular feeling or emotion. Satan can produce in us convincing feelings of closeness with God. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit doesn't always supply us with good feelings. One of the things the Holy Spirit does is make people uncomfortable with respect to sin in their lives.

The Work of the Holy Spirit

However, the Holy Spirit's work can be identified through the character and the results of His work. It is these two areas that show the uniqueness of the Spirit's work and set it apart from the work of man or Satan.

The Character of the Spirit's Work

The character of the Holy Spirit's work is what reveals His character and divine nature, and it is always in agreement with God's character as revealed in the Bible. This is because the Holy Spirit is God, who is unchanging, the same yesterday, today, and forever.¹³⁷ Therefore, we can use the Bible to tell us about the Holy Spirit's character and how He works today.

The Holy Spirit is the least understood Person of the Trinity, but this doesn't have to be. Because the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are One and share the same nature, we can learn what each Person is like by studying the Others. When Jesus walked this earth, He showed us what the Father is like so that when one of His disciples asked Him to show them the Father, He replied:

"Have I been with you such a long time, and do you not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father. How do you say, 'Show us the Father?'"¹³⁸

Jesus also showed us what the Holy Spirit is like because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus.¹³⁹ Just as Jesus revealed God's character and nature through how He lived, when the Holy Spirit dwells in us and works through us, God's character and nature should also be evident through our lives. Those who claim their actions are directed by God's Holy Spirit, while their actions

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contradict how God has already revealed Himself, are not being led by the Holy Spirit but by a deceiving spirit. For example:

- The Holy Spirit will not lead someone to glorify himself or a ministry at the expense of His own glory (Isaiah 42:8).
- The Holy Spirit will not cause someone to prophesy falsely. (Anything less than 100% accuracy is not of Him—Deuteronomy 18:22.)
- The Holy Spirit will not tell someone to lie or act deceptively (Zechariah 8:17).
- The Holy Spirit will not tell someone to steal (Hosea 4:1–3).
- And the Holy Spirit will not tell someone to seek a divorce (Malachi 2:16).

These things displease God, and what displeases God the Father also displeases the Son and the Holy Spirit. Angel Maturino Reséndiz¹⁴⁰ murdered 9 people in 1997 and 1998 because he believed he was on a mission from God to eliminate evil. His actions showed his mission was not from God. His actions contradicted God's character.

We grieve the Holy Spirit when we sin¹⁴¹, and when that happens, God's work is hindered in us. (This is not the primary way to determine what sin is because it is after the fact. We need to determine what sin is by God's word. But it is a way we need to become sensitive to.) If we are living a life of sin, then we are not being led by the Holy Spirit but by the flesh. When we are living in the flesh, we cannot please God.¹⁴² However, when we are led by Christ's Spirit, we cannot sin:

*Whoever remains in him doesn't sin. ...*¹⁴³

The Work of the Holy Spirit

When you sin, you can be sure you didn't do it under the control of the Holy Spirit!

God's character and nature were most evident through the life of Jesus on earth. We can learn a lot about God's character by studying Jesus' life and teachings, and by putting those teachings into practice. When we let the Holy Spirit have His way in our lives, we will become more Christ-like.¹⁴⁴ For example:

- We will be careful not to cause even the least person to stumble in his walk with God (Matthew 18:6).
- We will make sure our relationships with others are in order so that our relationship with God will not be hindered (Matthew 5:23–24).
- We will forgive those who continually sin against us (Matthew 18:21–22, Ephesians 4:32).
- We will love and seek to benefit those who are our enemies (Luke 6:35).
- We will humbly serve others (John 13:13–15).

Nobody is saying that these are easy things to do. But the Holy Spirit living inside us enables us to do them because God's work inside us reveals God's character and nature through us. If we are not living this way, then what's being revealed is not of God but of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

God's character is evident through the work of the Holy Spirit in both the Old and New Testaments. God's Holy Spirit was with David through much of his life, and it showed. David was called a man after God's own heart.¹⁴⁵ David was sensitive to the Spirit's leading. His life revealed much of what God was like, seen in such

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areas as his mercy to Saul and in the psalms he wrote. How much of God's character is revealed through your life?

The Results of the Spirit's Work

Just as with the character of the Holy Spirit's work, the results will also always be in agreement with the results of His work in the Bible. One of the most well-known passages on the work of the Holy Spirit is Acts chapter 2. Sometimes, when we read this chapter, we focus on only one aspect: the miraculous signs. But to gain a more complete understanding, we need to look at the ends, not the means, of the Spirit's work.

Now when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all with one accord in one place.¹⁴⁶

Pentecost, the Feast of Weeks, was a Jewish holiday that celebrated the bringing in of the first fruits of harvest. It occurred 50 days after Passover and was one of three holidays when all Jewish men were required to be in Jerusalem. So at this time, not only were all of the disciples still in Jerusalem (per Jesus' instructions in Acts 1:4), so were many other Jews. This chapter details the birth of the church, which was quite fitting considering the holiday. This was the day that the disciples first began "harvesting" new believers into the church.

We also read in this verse that the disciples were all together in one place when the Holy Spirit came. This group included the eleven remaining disciples (vs. 14), but it also included some women (including Jesus' mother) as well as His brothers and others who were previously meeting together for prayer.¹⁴⁷ We

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don't know exactly what they were doing at the time, but devoting themselves to prayer is a strong possibility.

Suddenly there came from the sky a sound like the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. Tongues like fire appeared and were distributed to them, and one sat on each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit gave them the ability to speak.¹⁴⁸

When the Holy Spirit came, it was suddenly and without warning. Jesus had said He would send the Holy Spirit¹⁴⁹, and they were expecting Him to come, but the disciples did nothing to cause Him to come. As Jesus had told them, all they had to do was wait in Jerusalem, and He would send the Spirit to them unconditionally as He had promised¹⁵⁰.

We don't decide how or when the Holy Spirit works; God does.¹⁵¹ Some churches teach or encourage spiritual manifestations such as speaking in tongues, "holy laughter," even barking like a dog or making other animal noises. The Holy Spirit does not work in this way. Look at the apostles. They were never taught their spiritual gifts. Jesus gave no instructions to His disciples about them. The most He did was mention a few gifts in Mark 16, but He never laid hands on them to impart to His disciples some spiritual power. The event in verse 4 happened completely in the Holy Spirit's own time and way.

We see here that the Holy Spirit comes at God's own leading, not at our own. We cannot cause ourselves to be filled with the Spirit. He is sovereign God who moves when He wants to move. But we can prepare ourselves to be used. We can willingly submit

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ourselves to His will, obeying the commands that He has already given us. When we do this, the Holy Spirit will fill us.¹⁵²

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under the sky. When this sound was heard, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because everyone heard them speaking in his own language. They were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Behold, aren't all these who speak Galileans? How do we hear, everyone in our own native language? ...we hear them speaking in our languages the mighty works of God!" They were all amazed, and were perplexed, saying one to another, "What does this mean?" Others, mocking, said, "They are filled with new wine."¹⁵³

When the Jews heard the apostles speak, they were amazed. Here were uneducated Galileans speaking fluently in their own native dialects. It was obvious to them that the apostles had never learned these languages. This miracle was in itself enough to attract their attention. However, not only did they recognize their own languages, they understood what the apostles were saying. They paid attention to the words. They heard them "speaking in our own languages the mighty works of God." This was something that would have been impossible had the disciples been speaking in an unknown language.

One of the results of the Spirit's work is that glory is brought to God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son—not only by believers, but also by non-believers in their praises to God.¹⁵⁴ By the end of this chapter, many of these Jews would become believers in Jesus Christ, but at this point they were only "devout men" who believed in Yahweh God, not in His Son. They were outsiders.¹⁵⁵

The Work of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit's work glorifies the Father and Jesus Christ. In other words, His work makes His character and nature known to believers and non-believers alike. Men come away with a better understanding of who God is and what He is like. This is one of the primary works of the Holy Spirit¹⁵⁶. The Spirit's purpose is not to glorify anyone or anything else—not a ministry, a leader, a spiritual gift, or surprisingly, even Himself.

When Jesus walked this earth, even though He was equal with God, He did not glorify Himself. Instead, He humbled Himself and glorified His Father, showing us what the Father is like.¹⁵⁷ Now it's the Holy Spirit's turn on earth in us. He also did not come to glorify Himself, but to glorify the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.¹⁵⁸

Beware of those who lift up a man or a ministry. When this is done, it is always at the expense of God's glory. We need to focus less on ourselves and our accomplishments, and focus more on God and what He has done.

*But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and spoke out to them, "You men of Judea, and all you who dwell at Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to my words. For these aren't drunken, as you suppose, seeing it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what has been spoken through the prophet Joel: 'It will be in the last days, says God, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh. ...'*¹⁵⁹

Peter's first public message was given under the power of the Holy Spirit. As Jesus had promised, he was given the words he needed to say in that very hour.¹⁶⁰ So what he had to say was very important.

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First, Peter addressed what had attracted the people's attention. No, he was not drunk as some had thought. This event was of God because it was a fulfillment of a prophecy written hundreds of years earlier. The prophecy said that in the last days God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh. It would not be limited to the occasional king, priest, or prophet. Instead, God would work through common people such as Peter the fisherman, Matthew the tax-collector, and even the Gentiles.¹⁶¹

What the Jews had seen was not only a fulfillment of prophecy, it also verified the authority and message of the apostles. Because this miracle was obviously of God, the people had to listen to Peter because God was working through him. They must listen to him or ignore him at their own peril.

Miraculous sign gifts, such as the gift of tongues, were given to validate the gospel message to non-believers. Paul taught this when he said tongues are a sign for unbelievers, those outside of the church, not for believers.¹⁶² We are not to seek after signs to increase faith, because we already "walk by faith, not by sight."¹⁶³

*"...It will be, that whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.' Men of Israel, hear these words! Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved by God to you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as you yourselves know, him, being delivered up by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by the hand of lawless men, crucified and killed; whom God raised up, having freed him from the agony of death, because it was not possible that he should be held by it. ..."*¹⁶⁴

The Work of the Holy Spirit

After Peter shows his authority to speak is from God, he draws the people's attention away from the miracle, and to the gospel of Jesus Christ. He uses Joel's prophecy as a lead-in to the heart of his message.

Peter pulled no punches when he spoke; he just spoke the truth. He didn't worry about what the people would say or do. If they rejected him, then they would really be rejecting Jesus. This was a big turn-around from the way Peter had previously acted. Just seven weeks earlier he didn't want people to know he was close to Jesus. Now, he boldly proclaims the gospel message. This was entirely due to the Holy Spirit's power in his life.

Jesus was clearly a "man approved by God." His miracles testified to His being sent by God. But even with this evidence, He was crucified unlawfully by the very people Peter was speaking to. God, however, raised Him from the dead. As a direct witness of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, the disciples' testimony carried a lot of weight.

The Holy Spirit works in us to spread the gospel message. The gospel focuses on the death of Jesus Christ on the cross as the final payment for our sins to reconcile us to God. It is the message of God's grace shown through the death of Christ. It is not a message of morality, healing, prosperity, Christian lifestyle, social change, religion, or anything else. These other things do not have the power to reconcile man to God.

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive

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the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all who are far off, even as many as the Lord our God will call to himself.” With many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation!” Then those who gladly received his word were baptized. There were added that day about three thousand souls.¹⁶⁵

Through Peter’s message the people were “cut to the heart.” They were suddenly aware of the status of their relationship with God, and almost in panic, they asked, “What shall we do?” This was a valid question since their guilt was real: they had crucified God’s Holy One.

The Holy Spirit convicts men of sin and grants true repentance.¹⁶⁶ In fact, it is only through the work of the Holy Spirit that we can come to a realization of our sin against God, confess it to Him, and on receiving His forgiveness, live a life that is a 180 degree turn-around from the way we were living before. All believers are saved through the work of the Holy Spirit. It is through His work that believers are added to the church.

A note on baptism: Peter said that everyone must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sins. The baptism he is referring to is the regenerating indwelling of the Holy Spirit that begins the moment we are saved.¹⁶⁷ It is the gift Peter refers to in verse 38.

The best illustration of the meaning of the word “baptized” that I’ve found is given by James Montgomery Boice in the Bible Study Magazine of May 1989, where he says the Greek word for baptized (*baptizo*) was previously used in a recipe for making pickles.

The Work of the Holy Spirit

A cucumber becomes a pickle by taking on the nature of the vinegar solution it is immersed in. The longer it is in the solution, the more the cucumber nature is replaced with the vinegar nature. This change is permanent; a pickle can never become a cucumber again.

Likewise, when we're saved, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us, changing us from the inside out. This is the process of sanctification, and it results in a permanent change. But it takes time. Just as the cucumber must remain in the solution to become a pickle, we must continue to walk in the Spirit to become more like Christ. The process is not instantaneous.

They continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and prayer. Fear came on every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together, and had all things in common. They sold their possessions and goods, and distributed them to all, according as anyone had need. Day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. The Lord added to the assembly day by day those who were being saved.¹⁶⁸

A change came over the people once they were saved. They had a new relationship with Jesus Christ and a new relationship with each other. Not only did they spend time under the apostle's teaching and in prayer and communion, they also started developing spiritual fruit. They sold their possessions, and with the money gave assistance to those in need. They did this joyfully

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with a great peace in their hearts. It was obvious the Spirit of God was at work in them.¹⁶⁹

The Holy Spirit produces good spiritual fruit in our lives. This fruit is listed in Galatians 5:22–23, Ephesians 5:9, and 2 Peter 1:5–7: Unconditional love, Joy, Peace, Longsuffering, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-control, Righteousness, Truth, Faith, Virtue, Knowledge, and Godliness.

When we let the Spirit have His way, this fruit will grow and mature in our lives, and the church will become more unified in Christ. Not only will individual believers grow, the church will grow as a whole. The Holy Spirit doesn't cause us to lose control, but frees us from the other things that control us so that we can do God's will.

The Bible says the fruit (results) of a work will tell you about the source of the work.¹⁷⁰ Paul said that the results of his work among the Corinthian believers showed that it was of God.¹⁷¹ He had no need to commend himself to them because the results spoke for themselves. They were clearly an "epistle of Christ," written by the Spirit of the living God on their hearts.

Jesus said every tree is known by its fruit.¹⁷² A good tree produces good fruit and a bad tree produces bad fruit. Jesus makes fruit the test by which we can tell if a work is of God or not. When the fruit of the Spirit abounds in our lives, we can tell that the Holy Spirit is at work. But if we exhibit the same corrupt fruit that is in the world, then our flesh and Satan are at work. Paul lists some of this corrupt fruit in his letter to the Galatians:

Now the works of the flesh are obvious, which are: adultery, sexual immorality, uncleanness, lustfulness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife,

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*jealousies, outbursts of anger, rivalries, divisions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these; of which I forewarn you, even as I also forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God.*¹⁷³

Corrupt fruit is a result of living a life that pleases the flesh. Living to please yourself will produce corrupt fruit that is not edifying, but destructive.¹⁷⁴ Try as you may, you cannot produce unconditional love, joy, peace, etc. through selfish living. The only way you can produce good spiritual fruit is by giving control of your life over to God, by remaining in Christ, and by walking in the Spirit.¹⁷⁵

Summary

These same characteristics of the Holy Spirit's work can be seen elsewhere in the Bible. For example, in the next two chapters of Acts we see Peter heal a lame man. This gave him another opportunity to present the gospel to the Jews and to glorify God.

I encourage you to study the nature, purpose, and work of the Holy Spirit. When you become familiar with how the Spirit worked in the early church and throughout the Bible, you can better recognize His work today, and discriminate His work from the work of deceiving spirits. (Some general passages on the Holy Spirit are Numbers 11:24–29, John 14–16, Romans 8, and 1 Corinthians 12–14.) As you read, try to set aside your biases and read these passages as if they are new to you. You may find some aspects of the Holy Spirit's work that you have previously overlooked.

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Testing is very important. You don't want to get sucked into every whim of doctrine, and neither do you want to be deceived into thinking you are being led by the Spirit if you're not. These qualities that I've listed can also be used to see if the Holy Spirit is working in your own life. Just ask yourself:

- Are my actions affirming or contradicting God's character or nature as revealed in the Bible? Am I obeying or disobeying God's commands? Am I living a more Christ-like life, or am I living like the world?
- Is God the Father and His Son being glorified in my life? Are people able to see and understand God better through me? Is His character and nature being revealed?
- Is it obvious to outsiders that God is at work in my life? Or is it only me, a ministry, or a spiritual gift they see?
- Is my spiritual gift being used to build up the church, either by providing opportunities to spread the gospel, or by helping the church grow more Christ-like? Or am I using my spiritual gift only for my own benefit, and for my own self-interests?
- Am I being used to spread the gospel message of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection? Are non-believers being convicted of sin, repenting, and coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ?
- Are all the fruits of the Spirit becoming more evident in my life? Am I showing love even to my enemies? Do I have joy when external circumstances seem contrary? Am I living a more sober, self-controlled life? Am I more patient?

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- Am I seeking the Holy Spirit's leading, or am I trying to lead the Holy Spirit? Am I seeking God's will, or am I looking for God's approval of my own will?

If one or more of these areas are lacking, I suggest looking for things in your life that are grieving the Spirit. Examine yourself to see what is hindering the Spirit's work in and through you.

The key to recognizing the Holy Spirit's work is becoming personally and intimately familiar with God Himself. Spend time prayerfully reading, studying and meditating on God's word. Do so in private, and together with your brothers and sisters in Christ. Get to know God through obedience to His commands. Get to know His nature, His character, and His purpose. Get to know *Him*. Then you won't be fooled by imitations.

The Galatians and the Law

It's a good thing to plan ahead when moving to an unfamiliar area. If you want a smooth move, you should first research who to contact for utilities such as gas and electricity, find out what kind of medical and dental services are available, and perhaps look into schools and health clubs. For Christians, it's also very important to find a church fellowship to belong to. A local phone book is a good place to start for all of these things. But when it comes to searching for a church in a city of any appreciable size, chances are you'll have to wade through a bewildering number of denominations and sects to find one that's healthy, friendly, edifying, and Christ-centered. If you ever have to do so, you may find yourself longing for the good old days of the early church, when everyone believed the same way. But things weren't so simple back then either.

A careful reading of the New Testament shows false teaching was a major issue in the early church. For example, Gnosticism, a sect that claimed to have secret mystical knowledge, was so prevalent, four of the apostles wrote letters to counter its influence.¹⁷⁶ But another form of false doctrine was present even from the beginning.

At first, the apostles preached the Lord Jesus Christ only to their fellow Jews in Jerusalem and Judea, resulting in a church made up exclusively of Jewish believers. As those believers entered into the New Covenant, many naturally brought some Old Covenant ideas with them. You'd think the apostles would have recognized this and nipped it in the bud, but they didn't know better themselves:

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- The Lord Jesus told the apostle Peter in a vision to kill and eat 'unclean' animals. As a Jew, Peter found the idea repulsive. He strongly objected, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean."¹⁷⁷ But Jesus replied, "What God has cleansed, don't you call unclean." That should have settled the matter, yet the Lord had to repeat Himself two more times before Peter got the message.
- Soon after, Peter and the other Jewish disciples were astonished when they saw the Holy Spirit falling on common Gentiles. They thought the Gentiles had to first convert to Judaism before they could become Christians.¹⁷⁸
- Later, some believers in the Jerusalem church challenged Peter over eating with those Gentiles, who no doubt served some of the same 'unclean' foods Peter saw in his vision.¹⁷⁹

One group of Jews that came at least to nominal faith in Jesus was the Pharisees. You'll remember from the Gospels that they were His most vocal opponents, and they often sought for ways to discredit Him or even kill Him. After the resurrection, however, some of them came to accept Jesus as the Messiah and joined with the other believing Jews. But not all believing Pharisees appreciated the grace that is in Christ. Some insisted Christians were under obligation to keep the old religious practices. They were known as Judaizers, and they became a corrupting influence wherever the gospel was preached. For the most part, their doctrine was successfully resisted, but one church did succumb to their wiles.

In this part, we're going to look at Paul's letter to the Galatian believers where he confronted them over their use of the Mosaic

Law in trying to achieve moral perfection before God. But before we do this, we need a firm understanding of some basic biblical terminology so we can understand where they went wrong.

A Right Standing Before God

Even with all of its faults, I'm thankful I live in a country with a system of justice. While some think the law is unnecessarily restrictive and would rather live without it, we need law so society can function smoothly. If you're a victim of crime, you want justice done, and you want to see the perpetrators punished. The legal system provides for people in authority to determine guilt or innocence, and then to punish the guilty or acquit the innocent as necessary. Without this system, society would rapidly collapse under the weight of crime and violence.

Justification is closely connected to the law. Suppose my neighbor accuses me of stealing his car. If I go to court and I'm found guilty of the crime, I must return the car and pay the penalty for what I did. But if the judge declares me not guilty, I am legally innocent. I don't have to worry about making reparations or spending time in jail because I have been justified of the crime. This is what justification is about: to be declared not guilty, and this puts a person in right standing with the authorities.

Justification is also tied to the Law in the Bible. Under the Old Covenant, God gave His Law to Israel to show how He intended them to live...so they would always be in a right relationship with Him. Some of that Law pertained only to them.¹⁸⁰ But much of the Law revealed God's standard of righteousness for all men everywhere. For example, everyone is to worship God and Him alone.

We are not to use God's name flippantly. We are not to murder or commit adultery. We are not to be envious of the things other people have. Breaking any of these commands is nothing less than a crime against God.

God intends that we live in a right relationship with Him. The problem is we all sin at times. We do the things God tells us not to do, and we don't do the things He tells us to do. Sometimes we disobey in ignorance; other times we do so willingly. Left to ourselves, we could never be justified in God's eyes because once we've broken one command, we've broken the whole Law, as James wrote:

For whoever keeps the whole law, and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.¹⁸¹

In other words, the judge will not overlook my stealing a car just because I didn't break any traffic laws in doing so. I am a law-breaker regardless of having kept the other laws.

Even if we never sin again, there is still the issue of past sins. If I never steal another car for the rest of my life, I still have to answer for the one I already stole. Similarly, even if you could live a perfect life from now on, all those sins in your past still have to be paid for. And the penalty for sin against God is infinitely worse than anything an earthly judge can sentence you to!¹⁸²

The good news is that Jesus Christ kept God's Law perfectly—without sin. And He did so in our place so we can have His right standing before God credited to us.¹⁸³ He also took the punishment we deserved, dying a shameful and bloody death to pay the penalty for our crimes against God (...yes, sin is *that* serious). All He requires is that we repent of our sin¹⁸⁴ and trust in what Jesus

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has accomplished for us. When we do so, He takes all of our guilt, and exchanges it for all of His righteousness. This is the only way to be declared not guilty before God, but it's fully sufficient for even the worst of sinners. Justification is freely available to all:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God didn't send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through him. He who believes in him is not judged. He who doesn't believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God.¹⁸⁵

Apart from Christ, you stand condemned before God. But in Christ, you stand justified. Once God saves you, He doesn't see your sin—He sees Jesus' righteousness. Justification, therefore, has to do with the righteousness of the Law.

A Possession of God

Unlike justification, sanctification has to do with holiness, not legal righteousness. It is about being set apart exclusively to God for His own purposes.

There are two ways in which this plays out in God's people. The first is positional and has to do with a change of relationship between man and God. When someone is sanctified, he is no longer his own man. God owns him, and has full rights over him. He becomes a *possession* of God. This is something we can see in the Old Testament.

When God first appeared to Abram, He told him to leave his native land and go to a land he had never seen before where God

promised to bless him and his descendants.¹⁸⁶ Aside from moving to the promised land, there were no conditions attached to this promise. Abram didn't have to live a certain way. He didn't have to obey the Law. He didn't have to give a percentage of his income to God. It was going to happen, regardless of how Abram lived.

When Abram arrived in the land of Canaan, God repeated His unconditional promise.¹⁸⁷ Then God promised to grant Abram a son in his old age—again with no strings attached. Abram believed God would fulfill His promise, and God counted it to him for righteousness.¹⁸⁸ Later, God appeared to him again. He changed his name to Abraham and gave him the covenant of circumcision, saying, “I am God Almighty. Walk before me and be blameless.”¹⁸⁹ But in all of God's dealings with Abraham or the other patriarchs, there was no implication of God's ownership beyond that of any other people. In other words, God never declared the patriarchs to be a holy people. That all changed four hundred years after the time of Abraham's grandson, Jacob.

Jacob's descendants eventually became slaves in Egypt. When God heard their groans, He rescued them from their oppressors by many mighty miracles, culminating with Israel passing through the Red Sea on dry ground. But it was more than just deliverance from slavery: it was *redemption*, as God told Moses:

*Therefore tell the children of Israel, 'I am Yahweh, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments.'*¹⁹⁰

Redemption is a somewhat misunderstood concept today. We tend to equate redemption with freedom: a slave is set at liberty at

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someone else's expense. But redemption is not about freedom; it is not emancipation. Redemption is a transfer of ownership.¹⁹¹ When God redeemed Israel, they became His special possession and were to obey Him in everything He commanded them. They became something never said of anyone before: a people *holy* to God.

*For you are a holy people to Yahweh your God: Yahweh your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, above all peoples who are on the face of the earth.*¹⁹²

With this change of relationship came new responsibilities based on God's right to command His people...

*For I am Yahweh your God. Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am holy... For I am Yahweh who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.*¹⁹³

*You shall remember that you were a bondservant in the land of Egypt, and Yahweh your God redeemed you: therefore I command you this thing today.*¹⁹⁴

As a redeemed people, Israel was bound in service to God. But redemption in itself did not make Israel righteous in His eyes, because *sanctification is not about judicial righteousness*. To be righteous before God, they had to keep the Law He gave them, which they also promised to obey.¹⁹⁵

We have it much better today. When Jesus saved us, we were declared righteous through faith apart from works of the Law (just like Abram), *and* we were set apart to God as His own (just like redeemed Israel).¹⁹⁶ We were both justified and sanctified at the same time by the blood of Christ.

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*We maintain therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.*¹⁹⁷

How can we be justified by faith if, as we saw earlier, righteousness is of the Law? Because Jesus fulfilled the Law in our place:

*For Christ is the fulfillment of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*¹⁹⁸

If Jesus had sinned just one time, we could never appear righteous before God, no matter how much we believe. Our righteous status before God depends on His perfect righteousness. But because Jesus kept the Law perfectly, His death was the perfect ransom for us. What was said of redeemed Israel is now said of everyone who trusts in Him for salvation:

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*¹⁹⁹

*Or don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*²⁰⁰

Transformed by God

When God sanctifies His people, He does it as a one-time event. Once God owns you, you remain forever His possession, just as Israel remained God's chosen people even after they rebelled against Him over and over again. God doesn't have to keep buying you back when you sin because you are already His.²⁰¹ But

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sanctification also has another meaning, and it's found in Paul's first letter to the church in Thessalonica:

For this is the will of God: your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality, that each one of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust, even as the Gentiles who don't know God; that no one should take advantage of and wrong a brother or sister in this matter; because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as also we forewarned you and testified. For God called us not for uncleanness, but in sanctification. Therefore he who rejects this doesn't reject man, but God, who has also given his Holy Spirit to you.²⁰²

It's clear Paul is not talking about a mere one-time status change before God. Instead, it's something ongoing, resulting in a change of behavior and our way of thinking.

Why do we need to be sanctified in this way? Well, as it says in Romans 6, God does not want us to live in sin anymore. We have been redeemed and have a new Master to obey. But even though we have been set apart to God and we want to obey Him, we still have urges to do things that are sinful. This is because our change of status before God does not in itself change our sin nature.

Let's assume I really did steal that car I mentioned earlier, and during my trial I discover to my shame it was the judge's car I stole. If the judge knows this, but pardons me anyway, I'm justified of the crime. Legally I am just as innocent as if I didn't steal the car. That in itself is fantastic news to me! But suppose I stole that car because I'm a kleptomaniac: someone with the urge to steal things. The judge's pardon frees me from any legal responsibilities I may have, but it does nothing about my compul-

sion to steal. I might not want to steal any more, but I still get urges to do so whenever the opportunity arises—urges I am very likely to succumb to because of my weak will in this area. (Think of a drug addict who wants to stay clean, but is continually bombarded with the urge to get high.) Even if the judge pardons me every time I steal his car, that's a terrible way to live! It's not good for me or for those around me, and more importantly, it dishonors the judge who has been so merciful to me. Not only do I need pardon, I need my kleptomania controlled, and ultimately cured.

In the same way, being justified by God does nothing to alleviate our sinful desires. Legal innocence does not cure an evil heart. But neither does being set apart to God, as the history of Israel shows. And self-control is futile because self is the source of our problem. To control and cure our sinful urges, we need supernatural help from outside of ourselves. We must look to God to supply what we lack, and this He has done by giving us His Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit does what is impossible for man to do. The Spirit caused the apostles to speak fluently in languages they had never learned. The Spirit conceived Jesus supernaturally, as the angel told Mary, "Nothing shall be impossible for God." If you've been truly born again, you have this same Holy Spirit living inside you. This means you have everything you need to overcome the desires of the flesh and to obey God.

"...His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness..."²⁰³

You don't need your own power, you don't need your own wisdom, and you don't need your own strength. None of these are

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sufficient for godliness anyway. All you need is to trust in God's all-sufficient power and humbly follow His leading, and over time He will work in you to make you like Christ.²⁰⁴ Have you made the most of what has been given you from the beginning?

To summarize what we've covered so far:

- Justification is about legal righteousness before God. It only comes through perfect obedience to the Law. Jesus obeyed the Law on our behalf so His perfect righteousness can be attributed to us.
- Sanctification is about holiness to God. It begins with being made His possession, and continues with being made like Him in character.

Knowing these things, we're now ready to look at the Galatians' problem.

A Church Fallen from Grace

Two thousand years ago, a couple of missionaries established some churches in what is now central Turkey. The region was then a Roman province called Galatia, and the missionaries, Paul and Barnabas, were on their first missionary journey.²⁰⁵

The first city in the province they came to was Antioch of Pisidia. When they arrived, Paul preached the message of justification by faith apart from works of the law of Moses. Many Jews and Gentiles gladly heard and believed the message, but some Jews who didn't raised a persecution against the missionaries and ran them out of town.

In Iconium, Paul again preached the gospel. As before, many believed, and many didn't. The Jews who didn't believe stirred up

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the people to violence, forcing Paul and Barnabas to flee from that city as well.

In Lystra, they proclaimed Christ to the people again, but the Jews from Antioch and Iconium followed them there and moved the crowds to stone Paul to death. Thinking he was dead, they dragged him out of the city. But Paul survived, and, ignoring the danger to himself, he revisited those same cities, urging the new believers to continue in the faith and endure the persecutions that would result.²⁰⁶ But it wasn't long after Paul and Barnabas left the region that the young believers allowed the enemies of the gospel to come in and teach a different "gospel," and this is where the letter to the Galatians comes in.

The epistle to the Galatians is somewhat unique among Paul's letters to the churches. It is the only one where Paul did not give thanks to God for his readers. Instead of thanksgiving, Paul expressed his alarm:

*I marvel that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ to a different "good news"...*²⁰⁷

This church had some serious problems...worse even than that of the carnal Corinthians. Only in this letter does Paul warn his readers of a curse, and only in this letter does he come close to losing his temper.²⁰⁸ After all the suffering he went through to bring the gospel to them, Paul was frustrated to see them falling away so quickly.²⁰⁹ Why was this happening?

When Paul departed from Galatia, he not only left behind new believers, he left behind the Jewish legalists that persecuted him. With Paul gone, they were able to freely attack the churches with the Law of Moses.²¹⁰

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But Paul didn't abandon the young Gentile believers. Having witnessed the same problem in his home church as well, he traveled to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus to address this very issue with the other apostles.²¹¹

After some heated discussion involving the local legalists of the Jerusalem church,²¹² Peter affirmed that salvation is entirely by grace through faith. The believing Pharisees had insisted the Gentile converts had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses. But Peter replied:

"...we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they are."²¹³

Did you catch that? Peter turned what the legalists said completely around. Instead of the Gentiles being saved the Jewish way, the Jews are saved the Gentile way! Regardless of background, whoever believes in Jesus Christ to salvation has no need to observe to the Old Covenant law!²¹⁴

To make this important doctrine clear, all of the apostles got together to write a letter to the Gentile believers stating they had no need to follow the law of Moses as some from the Jerusalem church were demanding. Paul and Barnabas took this letter back with them and read it to their home church in Antioch where they rejoiced at the news.

Knowing the letter would help the Gentile believers elsewhere, Paul went on a second missionary journey, revisiting the Galatian cities of Derbe and Lystra, to announce the apostles' decision.²¹⁵ Paul even revisited Galatia on his third journey.²¹⁶ But still, this wasn't enough to prevent the Judaizers from infiltrating the

church. When word of this came to Paul, he wrote his letter to the Galatians.

Discerning Their Error

When we read this letter, we tend to assume the Galatians were trying to be saved by the works of the law of Moses. It's very easy to come to this conclusion when we see warnings of "*a different gospel,*" and read statements like "*a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through the faith of Jesus Christ,*" and "*Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.*"²¹⁷ There is so much justification-by-grace-through-faith doctrine in Paul's letter that we think he was correcting their misunderstanding about how we come to salvation. And there is nothing wrong with applying the doctrine in this manner. We *are* saved by grace through faith, not by works. Any gospel that says otherwise is a false one. But salvation by works was not the issue. Their problem was how they lived *after* they were saved. They had a misunderstanding of sanctification.²¹⁸ How do we know this?

Well first, the Galatian church had already received the true gospel, and come to know God and be known by Him.²¹⁹ They were truly saved. As a result, they had already received the Holy Spirit by faith. Peter and Paul both recognized this as proof of their salvation²²⁰ and they even called them brothers.

Secondly, Paul didn't give a "how to be saved" message in his letter but focused on the practicalities of living the Christian life. This is very evident in chapter 2 where we see the word 'gospel' used in the context of how believers are to live. For example, when Paul wrote of the gospel he presented to the apostles in Jerusalem,

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he mentioned Titus, who was already a believer, not being compelled to be circumcised.²²¹ He repeated the apostles' instructions on how believing Gentiles are to live, and left out instructions on how they are to be saved.²²² He used practical words and phrases like "our liberty in Christ" (Galatians 2:4) and "walked" (Galatians 2:14). And when Paul rebuked Peter in Galatians 2:11-21, it was over a practical issue of how he lived, not about his lack of faith in Jesus to save him.

But their problem is even more obvious in chapter 3 where Paul began chewing them out in earnest:

*Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now completed in the flesh?*²²³

The word 'Spirit' here is an important clue Paul was not talking about how to become or stay saved...otherwise he would have said something like, "having begun in Christ." Justification does not come through the Holy Spirit; it comes through the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. The Greek word for 'complete' or 'perfect', *epiteleo*, is used nine times elsewhere in the New Testament, every time implying effort to accomplish something.²²⁴ But *epiteleo* is never used in reference to our work in gaining or maintaining a right standing before God. In other words, we have no need to perfect our righteous status before God, because Jesus has already done so. We are legally perfect *in Him*, ...and you can't improve on perfection! But we *are* told to perfect our sanctification:

*Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*²²⁵

The Galatians and the Law

This is the work the Holy Spirit accomplishes in our lives when we walk in Him (Romans 8:13, Galatians 5:16).

Also notice Paul did not condemn his readers merely for seeking moral perfection. He condemned them for the *manner* in which they sought it. The Galatian believers were trying to achieve sanctification by works of the Law. We've already shown that the Law is not connected with sanctification; it's connected with justification. Not only that, we are already justified by God's grace through faith. So whether we're talking about justification or sanctification, we're done with the Law. But there's another problem with trying to live by the Law, and that is it does not keep itself. If you want to keep the Law, then you must do so by fleshly human effort. As we've already seen earlier in this book, the flesh is not something we want to be running our lives with.

Sanctification is purely God's work...

*May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely.*²²⁶

Because the work is of God, His is all the glory...

*But of him, you are in Christ Jesus, who was made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, "He who boasts, let him boast in the Lord."*²²⁷

The Galatians began their walk correctly ('by the Spirit'), but then they ceased submitting to the leading of the Holy Spirit and let the Judaizers divert them. No wonder the ex-legalist Paul was so upset with them!

Our fleshly nature always thwarts our efforts in keeping the law, therefore it's completely unable to make us like Christ. We know the Law of Moses has no power to justify us, so how can we expect

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it to make us perfect?²²⁸ Even the Jewish legalists who were pushing the Law on the Galatians couldn't live up to its requirements:

For even they who receive circumcision don't keep the law themselves, ...²²⁹

As in the Jerusalem church, these legalists were likely Pharisees. The Pharisees presented an appearance of law-abiding people, but it was only an appearance. They were experts at keeping their traditions and the "ceremonial" law, but they broke the moral law just as much as everyone else. Knowing what they really were, Jesus called them "hypocrites," the Greek word for theatrical actors. Anyone who insists we must live by the Old Covenant Law also invites that same label on himself.

Appreciating Grace

The letter to the Galatians was written to protect the church from error, not to present the gospel to unbelievers. Therefore, you and I must take the warnings it contains personally, recognizing that we are just as vulnerable to the same errors.²³⁰

Self-sanctification is widespread in the church today. Most of us, if not all of us, have fallen into this trap at some time or other. While we easily recognize the error of justification by works of the flesh, most of us are blind to the error of becoming godly through our own works, just as the Galatians were. I think this is due to lack of teaching about our dependence on the Holy Spirit to make us Christ-like.

Without the Holy Spirit, we have only the Law to fall back on if we want to avoid sinning. Practically speaking, we remove the

Holy Spirit from the Trinity and replace Him with the holy scriptures. We substitute the Old Covenant regulations for the New Covenant promise.²³¹ As such, the Holy Spirit's role in our lives never moves beyond hypothetical doctrine into personal experience.

Why is this? Perhaps we're afraid to let the Holy Spirit work in our lives. Maybe when we see serious false doctrine and practices abound in some churches that have a strong emphasis on the Spirit, we go to the other extreme by avoiding the Holy Spirit altogether. I don't know, but I do know replacing the Spirit with the Law puts us in serious danger...

First, God didn't give the Law to stop sin, but to prove we are sinners by empowering our sinful nature:

*The law came in besides, that the trespass might abound; ...*²³²

The Law feeds our sinful passions. The more we seek to live by the Law, the more power sin has over us. It's not the Law's fault—the Law is righteous and good. But our fleshly nature still has sinful desires that attempt to use the requirements of the Law to make itself look good. (For example, when we see a command like “you shall not murder,” we pat ourselves on the back and think, “I'm good: I've never killed anyone.”)

Second, the Law *cannot give life*. If it could, then God would never had needed to send Jesus Christ to save us.²³³ The Law's purpose is to condemn and kill. It is even called the ministry of death.²³⁴ If you go back to the Law, it will perform its office. So if you don't want to be condemned and killed, then don't try to resurrect your judge and executioner!

Third, we downplay what Paul said in Galatians 3:10:

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For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse. For it is written, "Cursed is everyone who doesn't continue in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them."

Those who insist on living by the law are under a curse because they put themselves in debt to keep the *whole* law, with its sacrificial system, holy days, circumcision, dietary restrictions, and so on.²³⁵ While this is not the curse of Galatians 1:8 and 9, it is still a very bad thing!

Fourth, if we go back to the Law, we abandon Christ and fall from grace (Galatians 5:4). We cannot be bound to the Law and to Christ at the same time (Romans 7:1-6). The only way we can live to God is by completely dying to the Law as Paul did:

*For I, through the law, died to the law, that I might live to God.*²³⁶

And fifth, a legalistic sanctification mindset slowly infects our justification mindset, eventually sowing seeds of doubt about our salvation when we find ourselves unable to keep the whole Law perfectly. Legalism will always raise this doubt: Have I done enough to be acceptable to God?²³⁷

I think a big part of the problem is our lack of appreciation of the gospel. When we read or hear a message about the death of Jesus, or the importance of trusting in Him, we file the information away under the heading 'How To Be Saved.' We don't realize the gospel is also good news about what God does to enable us to overcome sin in our day-to-day lives. His day-by-day grace is expressed in His active working within the lives of individual believers, and just like justification, it comes on the basis of undeserved grace through faith.²³⁸ This is not a grace that lets us sin with impunity, but a grace that makes us like Christ. (I'm not

advocating lawlessness—that *would* lead to sin. Instead, we are to live by a different law: the law of the Spirit of life.²³⁹)

The Christian life is not one of following a standard or a set of principles, but of following a Person. Too many believe the only way to avoid sin is by keeping the Law. They are unaware that walking in the Spirit and abiding in Christ prevents sin, and does so much better than trying to obey the Law. Right living is an *effect* of walking in the Spirit, not the cause.

But we lack faith to live this way. We'd rather hold on to our own works through law-keeping because we're afraid to trust God to make us holy. As a result, we find no real victory over sinful habits.

*So that the law has become our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.*²⁴⁰

Sanctification is a process that continues for the rest of our lives. We don't drop law-keeping at the point of salvation, and then immediately take it back up again afterwards. We are no longer under that schoolmaster.²⁴¹ We live by faith. Faith is not only the beginning of the way of life, but its entirety. The faith that trusts God to justify us when we abandon our self-righteous works and believe in Jesus is the same faith that trusts that He will sanctify us as well when we abandon our self-righteous works and walk in His Holy Spirit. It is part of the same gospel. This is why Paul uses the doctrine of justification to address how the Galatians lived the Christian life: it's all by faith.²⁴²

We do not partake of a partial grace that gets us into heaven but doesn't make us fit to live there. The gospel is the good news of *all*

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that God does to restore us to Himself. If we continue to rely on law-keeping to make ourselves presentable to God, it would be well to ask ourselves what Paul asked the Galatian believers: “Are we so foolish?”

I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live, but Christ living in me. That life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me. I don't make void the grace of God. For if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nothing!”²⁴³

Abandoning Self-Righteousness

The fleshly nature has two ways of expressing itself. The first is the one we are most aware and ashamed of: it is our desire to do sinful things²⁴⁴. But the second way is also bad, and maybe worse because we are not ashamed of it—we're even proud of it: it is our desire for self-righteousness.

When I say self-righteousness, I'm not talking about a holier-than-thou attitude, or a hypocritical, righteous facade. I mean sincerely trying to do the right thing through one's own willpower and determination, apart from reliance on the power of God. This kind of 'righteousness' falls far short of what God requires for salvation, or for living the Christian life. The fact that law-keeping is insufficient for salvation can be seen in Mark 10:17–23.

A young man came to Jesus and asked what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus replied with the commandments, "Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not give false testimony, Do not defraud, and Honor your father and mother." The man replied, "Teacher, I have observed all these things from my youth."

Surprisingly, Jesus did not call the man a liar, nor did He try to correct the man on his inability to keep the Ten Commandments. This young man was able to keep the letter of the law—I'm sure not perfectly, but *Jesus didn't make an issue of it*. But also notice Jesus did not say, "Don't worry about it then. You've kept the Law, you're in!" Instead, He said, "One thing you lack. Go, sell whatever you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in

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heaven; and come, follow me, taking up the cross." Jesus said eternal life requires more than just keeping the Ten Commandments.

As he walked away in sorrow, Jesus remarked, "How difficult it is for those who have riches to enter into the Kingdom of God!" This amazed His disciples because the Law says nothing about wealth hindering one's entrance into heaven. (Actually, the Law mentions nothing about heaven.) The Law even includes blessings of wealth on those who keep its commands.²⁴⁵ But Jesus told the man to sell all he had, give to the poor, take up the cross and follow Him. The reason He did so was to reveal the fleshly heart condition that was keeping him from eternal life. The man was still a slave to his fleshly desires.²⁴⁶

The righteousness of the flesh looks deceptively good because *it claims the letter of the Law as its standard*. We think if we can keep the letter of the Law, we're righteous. This can be seen in the Pharisee's prayer:

*The Pharisee stood and prayed to himself like this: 'God, I thank you, that I am not like the rest of men, extortioners, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I get.'*²⁴⁷

Again, there is no indication that the Pharisee was being deceptive in his prayer. He was able to live up to the letter of the Law. And yet, it was the sinful tax collector who left justified, not the law-keeping Pharisee.

I see Paul in this Pharisee. Before he was saved, Paul was also able to live up to the letter of the Law "blamelessly".²⁴⁸ But once he was saved, Paul realized his legalistic self-righteousness had

brought him no closer to God. You see, the letter of the Law covers only a portion of the standard of righteousness. It is only the beginning.

Suppose someone handed you a bottle with the label “Lemon Juice” on it, but you were suspicious that it might contain something else that was perhaps poisonous. How would you know the contents matched the label? You would test it against the characteristics of real lemon juice.

Lemon juice is a slightly yellow sour liquid. As you look at the bottle, you see contains a yellowish liquid, but how can you tell it is sour (acidic) without tasting it? As you think about this, memories of your high school chemistry class come to mind: you can do a litmus test. Blue litmus paper turns red when dipped in acid. So if you dip some litmus paper in the liquid, and it doesn't turn red, you have proved the liquid is not lemon juice.

But even if the paper did turn red, that would not prove the liquid was lemon juice, because any acid will do that. To prove the liquid is what it says it is, it has to pass *all* tests for lemon juice (which goes beyond testing just for ‘a slightly yellow sour liquid’). Each test by itself can only disprove what it is. Only all of the tests together can prove what it is.

The Old Covenant Law is like a litmus test for righteousness. If you break just one command, then you are not righteous. But even if you keep all of the Law to the letter, that still doesn't prove you are righteous. The letter of the Law is only one test—just enough to disprove our righteousness, but not enough to prove it. Jesus gives more tests for righteousness in Matthew 5:17–48. You may have kept the letter of the Law in regards to murder, and yet still

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be guilty of murder. You may not have committed adultery by the letter of the Law, and yet still be just as guilty of adultery. Keeping the letter of the Law does not prove you are righteous because you still fail the other tests. But by breaking the letter of the Law (even one command), you immediately prove yourself a sinner.

*For whoever keeps the whole law, and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.*²⁴⁹

So by breaking just one command, the Law has done its job in proving you a sinner.

The flesh thinks it can live up to the Law, but doesn't realize the Law actually condemns it. Jesus shows us that God's righteousness is so perfect, we have no hope of fully meeting all of its requirements. We have to *exceed* the letter-of-the-Law righteousness of the Pharisees.²⁵⁰ Their righteousness, and ours, are just filthy rags.

Self-righteousness is done in our own power, with no real need to be grateful to God. It is not the righteousness *from* God.²⁵¹ Only Christ's righteousness satisfies God's standard. But His righteousness will only do us good if we forsake our own weak, fleshly attempts. When Paul was saved, he abandoned his own "blameless," legalistic self-righteousness, and trusted entirely in the righteousness of Christ. Let's follow his example.

Yes most certainly, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and count them nothing but refuse, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may

Abandoning Self-Righteousness

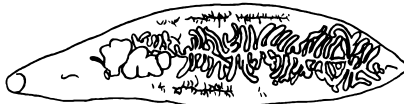
know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed to his death; if by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.²⁵²

Zombie Ants and the Flesh

*For I don't know what I am doing. For I don't practice what I desire to do; but what I hate, that I do. But if what I don't desire, that I do, I consent to the law that it is good. So now it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwells in me.*²⁵³

Paul struggled with sin, even after he was saved. He wanted to do good by obeying the Law, but he found he was not able to. No matter how hard he tried, he kept doing what he didn't want to do. It was like he had two natures: one that rejoiced in God's law, and another that held him hostage to things he now found abhorrent.

Paul was not making excuses for his sin when he said, "It is no longer I doing it, but sin that dwells in me." He was admitting there was something in him that prevented him from obeying God. It was like he was possessed, ...not by an evil spirit, but by his old sin nature. There's an interesting picture of this in the life cycle of the lancet fluke.



dicrocoelium dendriticum

The lancet fluke is a parasite that infects different creatures at different stages in its life. Adult lancet flukes live in ruminant animals such as sheep or cattle, but how they get there seems like something out of a budget horror movie.

Appendix: Concerning Deliverance from Sinning

An adult fluke lays eggs in the bile ducts of its host. The eggs move to the intestines and then leave the animal in the droppings. The eggs remain unhatched until a particular variety of snail ingests the droppings. Once inside the snail, the hatchlings replicate into many more 'cysts', and then transform into more advanced larvae. These larvae eventually migrate to the snail's respiratory system where they produce slime balls. The snail sheds these slime balls and larvae as it moves along.

Now remember, the adult lancet fluke lives in a cow or sheep. Snails are not part of their diets. So how do the larvae make their way back into these animals so they can complete their life-cycle? I'm glad you asked!

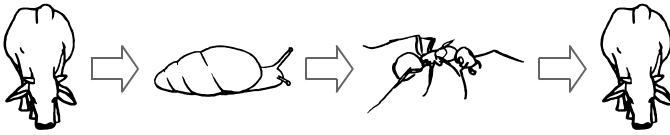
Along comes a particular variety of ant looking for a source of moisture. It finds a larvae-infested slime ball, and eats it. And this is where things get weirder.

Inside the ant, the larvae again transform into hundreds of more advanced larvae that live in the ant's gut. But after living there for some time, a single larvae leaves its siblings and heads for the ant's sub-esophageal ganglion where it takes control of the ant's actions. The ant is now a zombie, unable to function as a normal ant.

During the day, the zombie ant appears to act like a normal ant and works with the other ants. But in the evening, the zombie ant leaves the others, climbs to the top of a blade of grass, and holds on to it with its jaws all night until morning. It then returns to its fellow ants as if nothing happened. The next evening and the next, it climbs to the top of a blade of grass, until a chance cow or sheep comes by, eats the grass with the ant, and returns the parasite back

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to a large host. It then fully matures, mates, and produces eggs, closing the cycle of life.



Lancet fluke life cycle

Here's the question: Does the zombie ant truly want to get eaten? Of course not! But it can't help itself. It is no longer the ant doing what it wants to do, but the lancet fluke dwelling within dictating the ant's actions.

I see in these zombie ants a picture of ourselves when we allow our fallen nature to control our thoughts and actions. The illustration isn't perfect, as the whole human race has been infected since the fall, but it's close enough. When Jesus saved us, He gave us His Holy Spirit to overcome our sinful fallen nature. But we need to give Him control instead of letting our little parasitic nature run our lives. We need to live as children of the light, not of the night. Like the lancet fluke's control of the ant, allowing our fallen flesh run things leads to death, but letting the Holy Spirit run things leads to life.

For you were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord. Walk as children of light, for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth, proving what is well pleasing to the Lord.²⁵⁴

Appendix: Concerning Deliverance from Sinning

(excerpt from *All Of Grace*, by Charles Haddon Spurgeon)

In this place I would say a plain word or two to those who understand the method of justification by faith which is in Christ Jesus, but whose trouble is that they cannot cease from sin. We can never be happy, restful, or spiritually healthy till we become holy. We must be rid of sin; but how is the riddance to be wrought? This is the life-or-death question of many. The old nature is very strong, and they have tried to curb and tame it; but it will not be subdued, and they find themselves, though anxious to be better, if anything growing worse than before. The heart is so hard, the will is so obstinate, the passions are so furious, the thoughts are so volatile, the imagination is so ungovernable, the desires are so wild, that the man feels that he has a den of wild beasts within him, which will eat him up sooner than be ruled by him. We may say of our fallen nature what the Lord said to Job concerning Leviathan: "Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens?"²⁵⁵ A man might as well hope to hold the north wind in the hollow of his hand as expect to control by his own strength those boisterous powers which dwell within his fallen nature. This is a greater feat than any of the fabled labors of Hercules: God is wanted here.

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“I could believe that Jesus would forgive sin,” says one, “but then my trouble is that I sin again, and that I feel such awful tendencies to evil within me. As surely as a stone, if it be flung up into the air, soon comes down again to the ground, so do I, though I am sent up to heaven by earnest preaching, return again to my insensible state. Alas! I am easily fascinated with the basilisk²⁵⁶ eyes of sin, and am thus held as under a spell, so that I cannot escape from my own folly.”

Dear friend, salvation would be a sadly incomplete affair if it did not deal with this part of our ruined estate. We want to be purified as well as pardoned. Justification without sanctification would not be salvation at all. It would call the leper clean, and leave him to die of his disease; it would forgive the rebellion and allow the rebel to remain an enemy to his king. It would remove the consequences but overlook the cause, and this would leave an endless and hopeless task before us. It would stop the stream for a time, but leave an open fountain of defilement, which would sooner or later break forth with increased power. Remember that the Lord Jesus came to take away sin in three ways; He came to remove the penalty of sin, the power of sin, and, at last, the presence of sin. At once you may reach to the second part, the power of sin may immediately be broken; and so you will be on the road to the third, namely, the removal of the presence of sin. “We know that he was manifested to take away our sins.”²⁵⁷

The angel said of our Lord, “Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.”²⁵⁸ Our Lord Jesus came to destroy in us the works of the devil. That which was said at our Lord’s birth was also declared in His death; for when the soldier

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pierced His side forthwith came there out blood and water, to set forth the double cure by which we are delivered from the guilt and the defilement of sin.

If, however, you are troubled about the power of sin, and about the tendencies of your nature, as you well may be, here is a promise for you. Have faith in it, for it stands in that covenant of grace which is ordered in all things and sure. God, who cannot lie, has said in Ezekiel 36:26:

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

You see, it is all "I will," and "I will." "I will give," and "I will take away." This is the royal style of the King of kings, who is able to accomplish all His will. No word of His shall ever fall to the ground.

The Lord knows right well that you cannot change your own heart, and cannot cleanse your own nature; but He also knows that He can do both. He can cause the Ethiopian to change his skin, and the leopard his spots. Hear this, and be astonished: He can create you a second time; He can cause you to be born again. This is a miracle of grace, but the Holy Ghost will perform it. It would be a very wonderful thing if one could stand at the foot of the Niagara Falls, and could speak a word which should make the river Niagara begin to run up stream, and leap up that great precipice over which it now rolls in stupendous force. Nothing but the power of God could achieve that marvel; but that would be more than a fit parallel to what would take place if the course of your nature were altogether reversed. All things are possible with

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God. He can reverse the direction of your desires and the current of your life, and instead of going downward from God, He can make your whole being tend upward toward God. That is, in fact, what the Lord has promised to do for all who are in the covenant; and we know from Scripture that all believers are in the covenant. Let me read the words again:

*A new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give an heart of flesh.*²⁵⁹

What a wonderful promise! And it is yea and amen in Christ Jesus to the glory of God by us. Let us lay hold of it; accept it as true, and appropriate it to ourselves. Then shall it be fulfilled in us, and we shall have, in after days and years, to sing of that wondrous change which the sovereign grace of God has wrought in us.

It is well worthy of consideration that when the Lord takes away the stony heart, that deed is done; and when that is once done, no known power can ever take away that new heart which He gives, and that right spirit which He puts within us. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance";²⁶⁰ that is, without repentance on His part; He does not take away what He once has given. Let Him renew you and you will be renewed. Man's reformations and cleanings up soon come to an end, for the dog returns to his vomit; but when God puts a new heart into us, the new heart is there forever, and never will it harden into stone again. He who made it flesh will keep it so. Herein we may rejoice and be glad forever in that which God creates in the kingdom of His grace.

To put the matter very simply, did you ever hear of Mr. Rowland Hill's illustration of the cat and the sow? I will give it in my own fashion, to illustrate our Saviour's expressive words, "Ye must be

born again." Do you see that cat? What a cleanly creature she is! How cleverly she washes herself with her tongue and her paws! It is quite a pretty sight! Did you ever see a sow do that? No, you never did. It is contrary to its nature. It prefers to wallow in the mire. Go and teach a sow to wash itself, and see how little success you would gain. It would be a great sanitary improvement if swine would be clean. Teach them to wash and clean themselves as the cat has been doing! Useless task. You may by force wash that sow, but it hastens to the mire, and is soon as foul as ever. The only way in which you can get a sow to wash itself is to transform it into a cat; then it will wash and be clean, but not till then! Suppose that transformation to be accomplished, and then what was difficult or impossible is easy enough; the swine will henceforth be fit for your parlor and your hearth-rug. So it is with an ungodly man; you cannot force him to do what a renewed man does most willingly; you may teach him, and set him a good example, but he cannot learn the art of holiness, for he has no mind to it; his nature leads him another way. When the Lord makes a new man of him, then all things wear a different aspect. So great is this change, that I once heard a convert say, "Either all the world is changed, or else I am." The new nature follows after right as naturally as the old nature wanders after wrong. What a blessing to receive such a nature! Only the Holy Ghost can give it.

Did it ever strike you what a wonderful thing it is for the Lord to give a new heart and a right spirit to a man? You have seen a lobster, perhaps, which has fought with another lobster, and lost one of its claws, and a new claw has grown. That is a remarkable thing; but it is a much more astounding fact that a man should

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have a new heart given to him. This, indeed, is a miracle beyond the powers of nature. There is a tree. If you cut off one of its limbs, another one may grow in its place; but can you change the tree; can you sweeten sour sap; can you make the thorn bear figs? You can graft something better into it and that is the analogy which nature gives us of the work of grace; but absolutely to change the vital sap of the tree would be a miracle indeed. Such a prodigy and mystery of power God works in all who believe in Jesus.

If you yield yourself up to His divine working, the Lord will alter your nature; He will subdue the old nature, and breathe new life into you. Put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and He will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and He will give you a heart of flesh. Where everything was hard, everything shall be tender; where everything was vicious, everything shall be virtuous: where everything tended downward, everything shall rise upward with impetuous force. The lion of anger shall give place to the lamb of meekness; the raven of uncleanness shall fly before the dove of purity; the vile serpent of deceit shall be trodden under the heel of truth.

I have seen with my own eyes such marvellous changes of moral and spiritual character that I despair of none. I could, if it were fitting, point out those who were once unchaste women who are now pure as the driven snow, and blaspheming men who now delight all around them by their intense devotion. Thieves are made honest, drunkards sober, liars truthful, and scoffers zealous. Wherever the grace of God has appeared to a man it has trained him to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly,

righteously, and godly in this present evil world: and, dear reader, it will do the same for you.

“I cannot make this change,” says one. Who said you could? The Scripture which we have quoted speaks not of what man will do, but of what God will do. It is God’s promise, and it is for Him to fulfill His own engagements. Trust in Him to fulfill His Word to you, and it will be done.

“But how is it to be done?” What business is that of yours? Must the Lord explain His methods before you will believe him? The Lord’s working in this matter is a great mystery: the Holy Ghost performs it. He who made the promise has the responsibility of keeping the promise, and He is equal to the occasion. God, who promises this marvellous change, will assuredly carry it out in all who receive Jesus, for to all such He gives power to become the Sons of God. Oh that you would believe it! Oh that you would do the gracious Lord the justice to believe that He can and will do this for you, great miracle though it will be! Oh that you would believe that God cannot lie! Oh that you would trust Him for a new heart, and a right spirit, for He can give them to you! May the Lord give you faith in His promise, faith in His Son, faith in the Holy Spirit, and faith in Him, and to Him shall be praise and honor and glory forever and ever! Amen.

Endnotes

If you come from a legalistic background, some of the concepts found in this book may be new to you. I've included an abundance of endnotes to further explain my reasoning and to help your understanding and study.

The scripture I've quoted in this book is from the World English Bible™, a public domain, modern language translation that I find to be accurate. However, no translation is perfect. I encourage you to look up each of the following scripture references in your own Bible.

Introduction

¹ 1 Timothy 1:15

² 1 Corinthians 12:4-26

How To Gain Victory Over Sin

³ Matthew 11:29-30

⁴ 1 John 5:4

⁵ Acts 15:10-11, Romans 3:20, Galatians 2:16, 21, 3:11

⁶ Our need to be saved can be seen in Romans 2:1-6, our inability to save ourselves in Romans 3:9-20, and God's solution to our problem in Romans 3:21-26.

⁷ Romans 3:28, 5:1

⁸ It's very important to consistently interpret this section of Romans in light of the underlying theme of sanctification. If we try to understand verses like Romans 8:13 in context of justification, we open the door to a false gospel of having to maintain our salvation by works: we devalue what Jesus did to

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save us, and lose our assurance of salvation. This runs counter to what the apostles said in 2 Corinthians 5:5-7, 2 Timothy 1:12, Hebrews 10:22 and elsewhere which state that we can *know* we are *already* saved from the *future* judgment.

⁹ Romans 6:1–2, 12–13. Yes, sin is still a possibility for Christians. Otherwise, Paul would not be telling us not to sin; he would be telling us to be saved again.

¹⁰ Romans 7:15, 18–19, 22–23. The flesh is the natural mind that wants to do things its own way using its own resources, rather than God's way with His resources. Romans 7:5 sounds like the rest of the chapter is about pre-Christian experience, but note Paul does not say, "When we were under Law...." He says "*When we were in the flesh....*" which is true not only of unbelievers, but also of many Christians. It was true of the Pharisees who believed (Acts 15:5-7). It was true of the Galatian believers (Galatians 3:1-5). It was true of the Corinthians believers (1 Corinthians 3:3). It was true even of the apostles at times (i.e. Peter acting in the flesh in Galatians 2:11-14). It is true of many Christians today. Unless God does a special work of grace in this area, it takes time to wean ourselves off of our fleshly mindset.

¹¹ Philippians 3:4–6. Another clue that Paul is saved is in Romans 7:17: "*So now it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwells in me.*" In other words, it used to be Paul sinning, but it was so no longer. Paul said he served God with his mind (Romans 7:22, 25). Only a regenerate man can do this, for before we were saved, we were enemies in our minds towards God (Colossians 1:21).

¹² Romans 7:14.

¹³ Romans 7:24. Paul was not accepting of his condition, and neither should you be. Don't dismiss your inability to live right with, "Oh well. At least I'm saved!"

¹⁴ Romans 7:25

¹⁵ The context of Paul's giving thanks was his practical struggle with sin, not his guilt towards God. If his thanksgiving was about justification, then in effect he would be saying sin is okay because it's forgiven. However, Paul already told us we are not to sin in Romans chapter 6. So his thanks must be about sanctification. Also, remember Paul wanted to do good—a desire that we are not to ignore. It is God's will that we do good. So this victory must be a practical one.

¹⁶ Romans 7:6. This is Paul's first mention of the Holy Spirit in connection with our sanctification.

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¹⁷ Romans 8:1. The word “therefore” ties what follows with what precedes.

Paul is about to explain what he introduced back in Romans 7:6: serving in newness of the Spirit. (Some translations add an additional phrase in Romans 8:1 to show this: “...*who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.*”) Romans 7:7-25 is a parenthetical argument showing the insufficiency of the Law to restrain sin, and hence our need for the Spirit’s power to do so.

The word “condemnation” must be understood in context of what Paul had just written in the previous chapter. When we’re saved but walk in the flesh, our hearts and minds condemn us. Paul had much wretchedness in his failure to conquer sin, but he mentioned nothing about God judging him for his sin. Condemnation before God can only be addressed by the blood of Jesus, not by walking in the Spirit. Therefore, this condemnation must be self-condemnation (as in 1 John 3:20). But our lack of self-condemnation can only have its basis in God’s lack of condemnation.

¹⁸ Romans 4:5

¹⁹ See also 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8

²⁰ According to Romans 6:21, we should be ashamed of the way we lived before we were saved. We should be able to sense when the indwelling Holy Spirit is grieved by our sin. Count Zinzendorf wrote, “*I believe that if an affection for worldly splendour and a craving for sin still occupy first place in a man’s thoughts, or if his inner inclinations still move him to act against the mind of Christ, the Saviour has never yet resided in his heart.*” (Quoted in *Behold the Lamb, The Story of the Moravian Church*, by Peter Hoover)

²¹ Jesus used His physical body to condemn sin. He kept Himself from sin. A. T. Robertson wrote, “*He condemned the sin of men and the condemnation took place in the flesh of Jesus.*” (Quoted in *Robertson’s Word Pictures*, Romans 8:3)

²² Romans 8:2–4. “Ordinance” can also be translated “requirement” or “righteousness.” Remember, Paul is talking sanctification here. His focus is walking in the Spirit, not faith in Jesus. We are not just set free from the Mosaic law, but from the law of our sinful disposition! Halleluia!

²³ Romans 3:19. This “judgment” is the sentence of guilt before God. Galatians 3:10–11 says those who are under the Law are under a curse, and 2 Corinthians 3:6–9 says the letter of the Law kills. Paul even called the Law the ministry of condemnation.

²⁴ Romans 5:20, 7:5, 9–12, 1 Corinthians 15:56. The Law empowers sin like food empowers cancer. Food is always good, but if you have cancer, those cancer cells feed off the same nutrients as your healthy cells...and the cancer cells eventually take over the healthy cells. It never works the other way. The Law

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does not cause sin, just as food does not cause cancer, but it does enable the ‘cancer’ of our fleshly nature. This is the way the Law reveals our sin in all of its ugliness (Romans 7:13). (In criminal forensics, luminol is used to reveal blood that is not visible to the naked eye. The Law works like the forensic tool luminol to reveal the works of the flesh.)

²⁵ While the Law is done away with for justification, notice here that the Law is fulfilled in us *by the Holy Spirit* for sanctification (as prophesied in Ezekiel 36:27). However, don’t view the Spirit merely as a means to keep the Law. The Law is neither the means nor the end. You are no longer under Law but under grace (Galatians 5:18). Faith in Jesus and fellowship with God is now the focus, not the Law.

²⁶ Galatians 5:16. As much as we would like, the Spirit usually does not remove the lusts of the flesh. But it is sufficient that He enables us to resist them.

²⁷ This will seem shocking to those not familiar with Paul’s epistle. The flesh will revolt against this! I’m uncomfortable with this! But that is what the following scripture says.

²⁸ Romans 8:7–8. A Christian has two natures (Romans 7:17): the old fleshly nature that grows more corrupt over time (Ephesians 4:22), and the new Spirit-led nature which is being renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16). The flesh contains not the slightest amount of good (Romans 7:18) and is constantly at war with the Spirit (Romans 7:23, Galatians 5:17). There can never be peace between the two. (Some translations say “carnally minded” in Romans 8:7. “Carnal” is the same word elsewhere translated “flesh”. Unfortunately, translating the word differently obscures the fact that they are the same word with the same meaning.)

²⁹ In Romans 7:18, Paul said good did not dwell in him. What was true of Paul is also true of us. Our fleshly nature will always produce works like those listed in Galatians 5:19–21. The fleshly nature is like a dead body. Paul likened it to a corpse in Romans 7:24. As time goes by, a corpse becomes more corrupt and putrid. The process never goes the other way. Likewise, your fleshly nature never improves. I know this to be true of myself, because there are things I am tempted with today that I wasn’t tempted with when I was younger.

³⁰ Romans 8:12–13. To put to death means you no longer respond to fleshly desires. It is not that you don’t have those desires, but that you choose not to respond to them. You can only do this through the power of the Holy Spirit. But be careful that you don’t view the Spirit as a tool in your hands. The Holy

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Spirit is God. You don't wield His power; you submit to Him.

³¹ Resisting sin deals with the manifestations of the flesh, while sanctification deals with the flesh itself. Both are needed, but in terms of sanctification, we must place all our hope in God's power. James 1:14-15 says the lust (desire) of the flesh leads to sin, but sin when it has matured leads to death. This is why Paul says if you live by the flesh, you must die. It is the end result of this natural progression.

³² I know this doesn't sound right to some of you, but it is the logical conclusion when you consider God is the one who sanctifies us. This is seen in several passages such as 1 Corinthians 15:10 (*"But by the grace of God I am what I am. ...I worked more than all of them; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."*), Philippians 2:12-13 (*"...For it is God who works in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure."*), Colossians 1:29 (*"...according to His working..."*), and Hebrews 13:20-21 (*"Now may the God of peace, ...make you complete in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ..."*) Following Jesus is both easy (Matthew 11:28-30) and difficult. The difficulty lies entirely in the struggle with the flesh: putting it to death so God can do His work. But this the Holy Spirit equips us to do (Romans 8:13).

³³ We must learn to recognize the source of our works. Whatever we do, we need to ask ourselves: "Is this of the Spirit or the flesh?" If it is of the Spirit, then don't quench or downplay it. But if it is of the flesh, it needs to be put to death by the Spirit.

³⁴ Romans 8:11. Again, Paul is not interrupting his topic with something totally out of the blue, i.e. the resurrection of our physical bodies. "Mortal bodies" means the bodies we are living in right now. Our resurrection bodies are immortal. In context, this verse is about living in a God-pleasing way. The preceding verse says, "the body *is* dead," indicating Paul is not talking about physical death. This verse ties well with the phrases "mortal body" and "alive from the dead" in Romans 6:12-13. But even if you disagree with this interpretation, know that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work to sanctify you. Look up Ephesians 1:15-20, 3:14-16 and think about what it says about God's power toward you.

³⁵ Romans 8:4. My experience matches Paul's. He found that sin flourished when he tried to keep the Law, but he had victory over sin when he walked in the Spirit. The Christian life, therefore, is no longer a matter of submitting to the Law, but of submitting to the Holy Spirit.

³⁶ Some believers never even make it to chapter 6. They are the ones who presume on grace, and live like the world. Works of any kind are seen as

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unnecessary – even wrong. Yet, God saved us so that we could do the good works He has planned for us (Ephesians 2:8-10). Good works do not lead to salvation, but they are to proceed from it. Works for a Christian have to do with sanctification, not justification.

³⁷ Those who think law-keeping is easy should seriously examine themselves in light of Matthew 5:17-43. Jesus shows us that the Law primarily deals with the heart, and the heart of man is universally and desperately wicked.

³⁸ This believer is also enabled to live up to the Chapter 6 standard. Real victory happens for him. He realizes we are “*more than conquerors through Him who loved us*” (Romans 8:37, compare with Romans 7:24-25).

³⁹ Romans 8:14. Being a son or child in this sense has to do with a life that conforms to someone else’s example. (For example, see 2 Chronicles 17:3 where Jehoshaphat followed in the ways of his father David, and John 8:44 where Jesus said His listeners followed in the way of their father, the devil.) When we are led by God’s Spirit, we think and act like our heavenly Father.

⁴⁰ Galatians 5:24–25

⁴¹ John 6:63

⁴² 2 Corinthians 3:18

⁴³ Zechariah 4:6

⁴⁴ Galatians 3:3. Paul wrote this to those who were trying to follow the Mosaic Law, but his rebuke also applies to us when we try to obey any New Testament command in a legalistic manner. Sanctification comes not through self-reformation or self-determination, but through God’s transformation.

⁴⁵ This is what ‘walking in the Spirit’ means. It is not an emotional high, religious euphoria, or doing something miraculous. To ‘walk in’ means to follow in the way of. (A few of many examples of this are shown in Exodus 16:4, Leviticus 20:23, 1 Kings 15:3, 2 Kings 17:22, Acts 14:16, Romans 4:12, and Ephesians 5:2.)

We will always serve a master – either the flesh or the Spirit. If you are not submitted to the Holy Spirit, then you are enslaved to the flesh. You cannot make the flesh your slave or make your fleshly mind serve you.

⁴⁶ Galatians 2:21, 3:2, 5. Not that trying in general is bad. It is the law-focused variety that is bad for believers because we live by faith. But law-focused trying for non-believers can be good if it leads to conviction of sin and the realization that law-keeping is impossible. Romans 3:20 says, “*...through the law comes the knowledge of sin.*” This is not the mere knowledge of what sin is, but the pointing out of the power that sin has over us. We need the Law to

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perform this essential function to lead us to our need for Christ (Galatians 3:24, 2:19, Romans 7:7).

⁴⁷ Philippians 3:3. “Flesh” here is easily seen not to be our carnal desires but simply our natural power, will, ability, etc. The flesh is what I can do, as contrasted with what God can do.

⁴⁸ This war is also mentioned in Romans 7:23 (“*I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind...*”), 1 Peter 2:11 (“*Beloved, I beg you as foreigners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*”), and James 4:1 (“*Where do wars and fightings among you come from? Don’t they come from your pleasures that war in your members?*”)

⁴⁹ Galatians 6:7–8. The next verse is also important to remember: “*Let us not be weary in doing good, for we will reap in due season, if we don’t give up.*” God has designed this world so that we do not immediately reap what we sow. This principle works both ways. We think that, because we haven’t suffered any consequences of living in the flesh right away, we got away with it, but that is not so. Sowing to the flesh will eventually come back to bite us. And as is with nature, the harvest is always greater than what was sown. (The three principles of sowing and reaping are: you always reap of the same kind, there is a gap in time between sowing and reaping, and you reap more than you sow.)

⁵⁰ Galatians 3:2–3, 4:21–31, 6:12. See also Galatians 2:19, 5:18. Legalism is trying to please God or gain His favor by keeping a set of rules. It places the Law above what God is saying presently. For example, a legalistic Abraham would have completed his sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22 because God had directly commanded him to do so earlier. He would have ignored God’s later command through an angel to spare his son. Legalistic obedience has its eyes on the commands, but non-legalistic obedience has its eyes on God.

When you think about it, legalism is actually sinful for Christians. According to Romans 7:1–4, we had to die to the Law to be joined to Christ. Now that Christ is our husband, we can’t go back to the Law without committing spiritual adultery.

⁵¹ Not that sanctification is achieved by our effort in walking. It comes from the One we walk with...or rather the One we walk *in*. It is just like justification: we don’t save ourselves by our faith—the One we have faith in does the saving.

The effort we expend in sanctification is focused not so much on keeping commands as on denying ourselves and crucifying the flesh through the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:12-13). Without this, we won’t be able to keep His commands. Sin is the outward manifestation of an inner problem. As long as we

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allow the mind of the flesh to operate, sin will result. To gain practical victory over sin, the fleshly nature needs to be addressed. Otherwise, we're just attempting to cover up the symptoms.

Sanctification involves active dependence upon the Spirit to become aware of the fleshly mindset behind the sins in our lives (like Psalm 139:23-24). It includes confession of those areas as they are revealed, and trust in God to not only forgive those things, but to sanctify us (1 John 1:9). It involves relying on the Spirit to be able to say "No!" to the flesh – to put the flesh to death. It involves the 'reckoning' of Romans 6:10-11, and the 'presenting' of our bodies as instruments of righteousness to God (Romans 6:13, 12:1). It involves relying on His power to obey. All of this requires some effort on our part, but it is the Holy Spirit who grants the success in these efforts. As such, keeping Jesus' commands is the result of walking in the Spirit, not the means to walking in the Spirit.

⁵² Philippians 2:6–8

⁵³ Luke 3:21–22, 4:1, 4:14, 4:18, 21, John 3:34, 6:63, Matthew 12:28.

⁵⁴ Philippians 2:5, Ephesians 6:18, Colossians 1:8, Philippians 3:3, 1 Peter 4:6.

⁵⁵ John 14:15–18, Romans 8:9–10, Galatians 4:6, Philippians 1:19, 1 Peter 1:11.

Corrie ten Boom is quoted as saying, *"Trying to do the Lord's work in your own strength is the most confusing, exhausting, and tedious of all work. But when you are filled with the Holy Spirit, then the ministry of Jesus just flows out of you."*

⁵⁶ One practical example of this can be seen in how the gospel was presented by the early church. The apostles were told not to worry about what to say, but to trust the Holy Spirit to speak through them. When they did so, the Spirit spoke powerfully through them (Matthew 10:19–20, Mark 13:11, Ephesians 6:19–20, Acts 4:8, 6:10).

The Greek word for actor is 'hypocrite'. Don't merely act like Christ, let Christ live through you by His Holy Spirit.

⁵⁷ John 15:4–5. When Jesus tells us to abide in Him, I believe He includes the "how" (Spirit walk) along with the "what" (obedience to His teachings and commands). The two belong together. You cannot have one without the other.

⁵⁸ Galatians 5:22–23. This list contrasts with the works of the flesh in verses 19 to 21. But notice how Paul uses the word 'fruit' here instead of 'works'. This shows these traits do not come about through personal effort. The most we can produce on our own are counterfeits that may fool ourselves or others.

⁵⁹ Acts 2:41–47, Philippians 2:12–13, 1 Thessalonians 4:9, 5:23–24.

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⁶⁰ 1 Corinthians 1:11–12, 3:1–7, 5:1–2, 6:1–8, 11:17–19

⁶¹ Matthew 5:6. Righteousness is simply being in a right relationship with God. Jesus satisfies this hunger (John 6:35), and the Spirit satisfies this thirst (John 4:14, 7:37–39).

⁶² Our dependence on the Spirit to live as Christians is sprinkled throughout the New Testament. Many of us (myself included) tend to gloss over the phrase “in the Spirit” or “by the Spirit” in passages such as Ephesians 6:18, Colossians 1:8, Philippians 3:3, 1 Peter 4:6, and Romans 8:13, but we need to realize we can’t do it on our own. This takes mental discipline, which comes in the continual, conscious reliance on God’s power in us to live holy lives. There is an awareness that without Him we can do nothing, but with Him we can do all things. We must continually look to God to daily provide what is needed in us to live in the manner He desires. We never come to the point where we think we’ve matured enough to obey on our own. And we seek to avoid whatever hinders (grieves) this dependent relationship with God.

⁶³ It is possible to think we have let go of the flesh when we haven’t really. Sometimes God lets us struggle in our own strength until we truly give up on our flesh before He empowers us with the Holy Spirit. It is dishonest to intend to give credit to God for what you attempt in your own strength (Luke 18:11–12). You should also check yourself for the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19–21.

⁶⁴ Hebrews 4:12. See also 2 Timothy 3:16–17.

⁶⁵ Psalm 139:23–24

⁶⁶ Ephesians 4:30. You may be aware of a certain sin you want victory over, but the Spirit may reveal another sin in your life that needs to be addressed more urgently. For example, you may be concerned about not spending enough time in worship, while being unaware that you need to be reconciled with someone else first (Matthew 5:23–24).

⁶⁷ 1 John 1:9

⁶⁸ Romans 8:20 says the creation has been subjected to vanity. As a result of man’s fall into sin and the resulting curse (Genesis 3:17–19), we find our efforts in bettering and preserving ourselves continually frustrated, and ultimately unsuccessful, especially in regards to spiritual matters. (This ties in with the condemnation of the Law in Romans 3:19 and the curse of the Law in Galatians 3:10.) But now we have received the “first-fruits of the Spirit” (verse 23). The Holy Spirit undoes the work of the curse, and our effort is no longer subject to frustration as we walk in the Spirit. It is now possible to successfully resist temptation. This benefit is only the beginning of what we

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will eventually receive, leading to the redemption of our bodies (verse 23) and the complete removal of the sin nature.

⁶⁹ Romans 6:10–11. ‘Reckoning’ (or accounting) is not, in itself, the way to overcome sin. Otherwise, Paul would not have gone on to describe the necessity of walking in the Spirit. I said earlier that the chapter 6 standard is impossible to live by, because in the flow of Paul’s argument he had not yet mentioned the Spirit’s role in sanctification. Such a life is impossible without the Holy Spirit.

⁷⁰ Romans 6:13, 19

⁷¹ Romans 12:1–2. A sacrifice is always of something good, not of evil. This sacrifice is not just the giving up of one or more sins, but the giving up of your will to God’s will.

⁷² 2 Corinthians 3:18 tells us the Agent of this transformation is the Holy Spirit.

⁷³ *All Of Grace*, Chapter 6 - Concerning Deliverance From Sinning. The complete chapter is presented in the appendix of this book.

⁷⁴ Romans 8:6, 13

⁷⁵ When I am weak, then I am strong (2 Corinthians 12:10). Outside of Christ, I can do nothing (John 15:4-5). In Christ, I can do all things (Philippians 4:13).

⁷⁶ James 4:2 says “*You don’t have, because you don’t ask.*”

⁷⁷ Jesus told us to ask our heavenly Father to “*lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*” (Matthew 6:13). Some translations say “*evil one*”, but “*one*” is not in the original language. We need God’s help to protect us, not only from the evil that can happen to us, but from the evil we do.

⁷⁸ Philippians 2:1, John 14:17.

⁷⁹ Romans 8:11, 14, Galatians 5:16

⁸⁰ 2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5, Ephesians 1:14

⁸¹ Romans 8:9. When Paul found some believers who had not received the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1–4), he discovered it was because they had not believed in Jesus. In Acts 8:14–17, where the Samaritans believed and then later received the Holy Spirit, they were not saved until the Spirit was given. This is because salvation is the result of what God does, not what man does. Man does not save himself by his belief. Faith is merely a precondition for salvation. Only God saves.

If you have been born again, there should be evidence of the Holy Spirit in you. What evidences do you see in your life? Do other people notice you are becoming more like Christ? (Don’t be self-deceived into thinking you are

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making progress if nobody can see it.) There should be spiritual fruit developing, progress towards Christ-likeness, an increasing grief and abhorrence of personal sin, and an increasing love, trust, and obedience for Jesus Christ. Over time the world should have less of a hold on you, and there should be an increasing burden for the lost. There will never be perfection on earth, and you may have occasional setbacks, but there should not be stagnation.

You should be able to perceive the Holy Spirit in you, just as you can perceive you are alive. One purpose of the Spirit is to testify that we are children of God (1 John 5:10, Romans 8:16, 1 Corinthians 6:19). The Greek word for “know” in that last reference is *eido*, which means the knowledge of perception, not the knowledge of doctrine or learning. You should be able to detect the Holy Spirit in you, not as a feeling, but through His work in your life.

If you don’t have the Holy Spirit, but you think you should, are you truly saved? Were you ‘saved’ as a result of something you did (i.e. agreed with a doctrine, asked Jesus to come into your heart, etc.), or because of something God did in response to your faith? Are you born of *God*?

⁸² Acts 2:38–39

⁸³ Luke 11:13

⁸⁴ 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24

⁸⁵ Jude 1:24–25. The World English Bible has “*keep them from stumbling.*” I have elected to change the text to match the vast majority of translations which translate the Greek word *αὐτός* as “*you.*”

⁸⁶ Hebrews 13:20-21

Fitted to Christ—A Parable

⁸⁷ I quoted this story from <http://inspirationalstories.com/3/338.html>

⁸⁸ Romans 13:14

⁸⁹ Colossians 3:9–10. The “old man” is another name for the flesh.

⁹⁰ Romans 8:29

⁹¹ 2 Corinthians 3:18

The Examination of the Scriptures

⁹² Psalm 139:23–24

⁹³ 1 John 2:15

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⁹⁴ Matthew 13:7, 22

⁹⁵ Galatians 6:7

⁹⁶ Galatians 6:8. Note the wording. It is not *what* you sow, but *where* you sow. Two people can do the same thing, but get different results if one is flesh-led and the other Spirit-led.

⁹⁷ John 15:4–5

⁹⁸ James 1:22–25

⁹⁹ Matthew 7:24–27

¹⁰⁰ John 13:17

¹⁰¹ Psalm 119:105

¹⁰² Psalm 26:2

The Catwalk

¹⁰³ Romans 13:14

Why Perfection is Delayed

¹⁰⁴ 1 Peter 2:11

¹⁰⁵ Luke 22:42

¹⁰⁶ Hebrews 5:8

How Powerful is Your God?

¹⁰⁷ Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Philippians 3:21

¹⁰⁸ 1 Kings 18:37–38

¹⁰⁹ Romans 12:1

Yokes

¹¹⁰ Matthew 11:29–30.

¹¹¹ 2 Corinthians 6:14

¹¹² Acts 15:10

¹¹³ Galatians 5:1

¹¹⁴ Taking on Christ's yoke and carrying His burden implies effort on our part. However, the thing about His yoke (as with any yoke) is that it makes the

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work we are to do easier. Many Christians act like the yoke or burden is the Law. But Peter basically ruled this out in Acts 15:10. I understand His yoke to be the Holy Spirit, who helps us in our weakness, and the burden to be the work God has for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

¹¹⁵ 1 Timothy 6:1–2

¹¹⁶ 1 John 5:3

The Lord Who Loves Us

¹¹⁷ John 15:10–15

¹¹⁸ Romans 5:6–8

¹¹⁹ John 14:15

The Work of the Holy Spirit

¹²⁰ Photocopy in *The Wittenburg Door's Truth Is Stranger Than Fiction* calendar, published by Harvest House Publishers.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² While I haven't made any significant changes to this since I wrote it over 15 years ago, my understanding of spiritual gifts (manifestations) has changed. We don't necessarily have one or two fixed gifts assigned to us for the rest of our lives. The Spirit can work in various ways and at various times through an individual believer.

¹²³ Proverbs 18:17

¹²⁴ 1 Corinthians 12:4–11

¹²⁵ 1 John 4:1

¹²⁶ Deuteronomy 13:1–3

¹²⁷ Deuteronomy 5:7

¹²⁸ Exodus 7:11–12

¹²⁹ Matthew 24:24, Mark 13:22

¹³⁰ 1 Corinthians 14:29

¹³¹ Revelation 2:2

¹³² Acts 17:11

¹³³ 1 Thessalonians 5:21

¹³⁴ <http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/blessing.html>

¹³⁵ 1 Corinthians 10:9

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¹³⁶ <http://www.science-frontiers.com/sf051/sf051p15.htm>

¹³⁷ Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8

¹³⁸ John 14:9

¹³⁹ Romans 8:9–11, Galatians 4:6

¹⁴⁰ http://lubbockonline.com/stories/051100/sta_051100113.shtml

¹⁴¹ Ephesians 4:30, Isaiah 63:10

¹⁴² Romans 8:8

¹⁴³ 1 John 3:6

¹⁴⁴ 1 John 2:6

¹⁴⁵ Acts 13:22, 1 Samuel 13:14

¹⁴⁶ Acts 2:1

¹⁴⁷ Acts 1:13–14

¹⁴⁸ Acts 2:2–4

¹⁴⁹ John 15:26, 16:7

¹⁵⁰ Acts 1:4

¹⁵¹ Numbers 11:24–29

¹⁵² A note on spiritual gifts: All believers are given at least one spiritual gift. The gift you were given was not given for your own benefit but for the benefit of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:7). Spiritual gifts are relational. They are meant to be used for others, either to help bring new believers into the church, or to make those who are already believers stronger in Christ. Don't use your gift on yourself—use it for others.

¹⁵³ Acts 2:5–8, 11–13

¹⁵⁴ 1 Corinthians 14:23–25

¹⁵⁵ One important point in this chapter is that even those who believe in God need to hear about Jesus Christ and what He has done. Just believing in God, or being a religious or “spiritual” person, is not enough.

¹⁵⁶ John 15:26, 16:14, 1 Corinthians 12:3, 1 Peter 1:10–12, 1 John 4:1–3, 5:6

¹⁵⁷ Philippians 2:6–8, John 8:50, 14:7–9, Hebrews 5:5

¹⁵⁸ John 16:14

¹⁵⁹ Acts 2:14–20

¹⁶⁰ Luke 12:12

¹⁶¹ Acts 10:45

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¹⁶² 1 Corinthians 14:22. This was especially significant since the Jews were ‘sign-seekers’ (John 4:48, 6:30, 20:25, 1 Corinthians 1:22).

¹⁶³ 2 Corinthians 5:7, John 20:29, Matthew 12:39, John 12:37

¹⁶⁴ Acts 2:21–36

¹⁶⁵ Acts 2:37–41

¹⁶⁶ John 16:8, Acts 11:15–18

¹⁶⁷ John 3:5, Titus 3:5

¹⁶⁸ Acts 2:42–47

¹⁶⁹ The things these people did was not how they came to be Spirit-led. It was the result of being Spirit-led.

¹⁷⁰ Matthew 7:15–24

¹⁷¹ 2 Corinthians 3:1–4

¹⁷² Luke 6:44

¹⁷³ Galatians 5:19–21

¹⁷⁴ Galatians 6:7–8

¹⁷⁵ John 15:4, Philippians 1:11

The Galatians And The Law

¹⁷⁶ Gnostics taught that the physical body is evil, therefore Jesus did not come in a physical body. This belief simultaneously led to asceticism among some adherents, and indifferent hedonism among others. Gnosticism is alluded to in Colossians 2:21-23, 1 Timothy 4:3, 6:20-21, 2 Peter 2:12, 18, 1 John 4:1-6, Jude 3-4, and elsewhere.

¹⁷⁷ Acts 10:14

¹⁷⁸ Acts 10:45

¹⁷⁹ Acts 11:1-3. See also Luke 10:8 and 1 Corinthians 10:27.

¹⁸⁰ For example, the dietary laws were given specifically to the Jews, not to all men. Leviticus 11 describes the animals that were to be considered an “abomination” to Israel (vss. 10-12, 20, 23). Yet Deuteronomy 14:21 permitted Gentiles to eat what was forbidden to Israel.

¹⁸¹ James 2:10

¹⁸² Ezekiel 18:4, Romans 6:23, Revelation 21:8. The punishment for sin is so harsh because sin is against an infinitely holy and righteous God. For more understanding of this, read my short article *The Mathematics of Heaven or Hell* (<http://dtjsoft.com/the-mathematics-of-heaven-or-hell/>).

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¹⁸³ 2 Corinthians 5:21

¹⁸⁴ The Greek word for repent, *metanoeo*, means to think differently. As such, repentance is not about doing good works to earn salvation. It is a change of heart and mind in regards to God. It is laying down one's antagonism to God and His decrees, and humbling oneself before Him. In a word, it is surrender. Repentance is a necessary prerequisite to salvation, as seen in Acts 2:37-38, 3:19, 5:31, 17:30-31, 20:18-21, and 26:20. For a more detailed explanation, read *A Heart Of Repentance* (<http://dtjsoft.com/a-heart-of-repentance/>).

¹⁸⁵ John 3:16-18. Belief in Jesus is more than just believing He exists or is a good man. It is trusting in everything He said about Himself, such as in John 10:30-33, 12:45, 16:15, 14:8-9, 5:16-24, 8:24, 28, 56-59, and 18:5-8. See also Matthew 4:17, Acts 17:30-30.

¹⁸⁶ Genesis 12:1-3

¹⁸⁷ Genesis 13:14-17

¹⁸⁸ Genesis 15:1-6

¹⁸⁹ Genesis 17:1ff

¹⁹⁰ Exodus 6:6, 15:3, Deuteronomy 7:8

¹⁹¹ You can see this with Ruth the Moabite. After her first husband died, Ruth was a free woman. But she chose to be redeemed by Boaz because she recognized the blessing of becoming a part of God's people (Ruth 4:9-10). I also think you can see this in the phrase "*redemption of the transgressions*" (Hebrews 9:15) which speaks of Jesus taking on the sins of His people.

¹⁹² Deuteronomy 7:6, 14:2.

¹⁹³ Leviticus 11:44-45

¹⁹⁴ Deuteronomy 15:15. Right before God gave Israel the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20), He gave the primary motive for their obedience: "*I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*" God delivered Israel out of Egypt to form a people for Himself, not merely because He felt pity for them. This is also seen in Deuteronomy 5:15, 16:12, and Leviticus 19:35-37.

¹⁹⁵ Exodus 19:3-10, 24:3, 7. It is a significant fact that before the children of Israel agreed to keep the Law, they never suffered punishment for their sins, but afterwards, they did almost every time. (I go into this in detail in my study *Grace Appreciated* (<http://dtjsoft.com/grace-appreciated>)). Right before they made this agreement, God told them, "*Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice, and keep my covenant, then you shall be my own possession from*

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among all peoples; for all the earth is mine; you shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6). This is the first use of the word "holy" to describe a person or nation. God was telling them what they were getting themselves into: they were voluntarily giving themselves to God for Him to do with as He wished.

¹⁹⁶ Hebrews 10:29. See also Acts 20:28, 1 Corinthians 6:20, 7:23, and Revelation 5:9.

¹⁹⁷ Romans 3:28

¹⁹⁸ Romans 10:4. We are saved by works, but it is Jesus' completed work that saves, not our own.

¹⁹⁹ 1 Peter 2:9.

²⁰⁰ 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

²⁰¹ Hebrews 9:12, 10:10

²⁰² 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8. Sometimes I'll use the phrase 'practical righteousness,' as distinct from judicial righteousness, to mean holy living. This sanctification-type righteousness is also spoken of in Titus 2:12 and 1 John 2:29, 3:7.

²⁰³ 2 Peter 1:2-4

²⁰⁴ Sanctification only happens to those who have first been justified (declared righteous) and sanctified (set apart) for this purpose. Being justified is necessary, otherwise the Holy Spirit can't take residence in us, because He is holy. And being sanctified (the first meaning) is necessary to make us fully God's own so He can do with us what He wants to do.

²⁰⁵ To better understand the epistle to the Galatians, I highly recommend reading Acts 13:14 through 16:5 first.

²⁰⁶ Acts 14:21-23, 2 Timothy 3:10-16. As they listened to Paul, the marks on his body from the stoning must have given added meaning to what he said. See Galatians 6:17.

²⁰⁷ Galatians 1:6. According to Romans 7:1-6. the Galatians were abandoning their new Husband for the old one. Compare with 2 Corinthians 11:2-4.

²⁰⁸ Galatians 1:6-9, 3:10, 5:12

²⁰⁹ Galatians 4:11, 19-20. Paul implies his sufferings for them weren't over yet. The Galatians had bought into the lie of legalism to the point where Paul wondered if they were going to attack him as well (Galatians 4:16-17). Paul had exhorted them to continue in the faith and endure suffering (Acts 14:22) as he had done (Acts 13:50, 14:2, 5, 19), but having tasted suffering themselves (Galatians 3:4), they fell from fear of more suffering (Galatians 6:12).

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²¹⁰ Foreknowledge of this must have led Paul to urge the Galatians to continue in the faith and endure persecution. Similarly, when Paul left the Ephesians for the last time, he warned them to be on their guard against the “grievous wolves” that would come among them when he left (Acts 20:29). He warned the Philippians (Philippians 3:2-3), the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 7:18-19), and Titus (Titus 1:10) of the legalists. Legalism is very contagious. Even the apostle Peter and Barnabas succumbed to it (Galatians 2:11-14). We must also be on our guard as the true gospel is always under attack from the enemy.

²¹¹ Acts 15:1-2, Galatians 2:1-2

²¹² Acts 15:5-7. These legalists were Pharisees. Paul called them “false brothers” in Galatians 2:4-5, whom all of the apostles resisted.

²¹³ Acts 15:11. Titus was a Gentile. But in spite of the insistence of the Jewish legalists, he was not compelled to be circumcised (Galatians 2:3). We are all children of God through faith (Galatians 3:26, 28, 4:6-7, 12). Gentiles are not to become Jewish proselytes, and Jews are not to cling to the Old Covenant.

²¹⁴ Peter was a Jew, yet he lived as the Gentiles (Galatians 2:14). The same was true of Paul (Galatians 4:12).

²¹⁵ Acts 15:36, 16:1, 4-6.

²¹⁶ Acts 18:23.

²¹⁷ Galatians 1:6, 2:16, 3:6

²¹⁸ On the surface, this may not be obvious, because justification is mentioned over and over again in this epistle, and sanctification is not mentioned even once. The reason Paul wrote about justification is because the Galatians were trying to live by the Law, and the Law is about justification. They thought it was about holiness and getting closer to God, but in following the Law, they were really falling away from Christ (Galatians 4:19, 5:4). They were undermining the foundation of their faith.

²¹⁹ Galatians 1:9, 4:9. On the importance of Jesus “knowing” us, see Matthew 7:21-23.

²²⁰ Acts 15:8. The Galatians received the Holy Spirit in Acts 13:52, which Paul refers to in Galatians 3:2. Peter had previously seen the same thing happen with Cornelius’ household, and recognized this as evidence of salvation (Acts 10:1-11:18, Ephesians 1:13-14). Peter and Paul both acknowledged that the Holy Spirit is received as a gift from God, not on the basis of works of Law (Acts 2:38-39).

²²¹ Galatians 2:2-3

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- ²²² Galatians 2:10. It is significant that the words “saved” and “salvation” do not appear in this letter.
- ²²³ Galatians 3:3
- ²²⁴ The word is used elsewhere in Luke 13:32 (‘perform cures’), Romans 15:28 (‘I have performed this’), 2 Corinthians 7:1 (‘perfecting holiness’), 2 Corinthians 8:6 (‘he would finish’), 2 Corinthians 8:11 (‘perform’), Philippians 1:6 (‘He will perform’), Hebrews 8:5 (‘make the tabernacle’), Hebrews 9:6 (‘accomplishing the service’), and 1 Peter 5:9 (‘afflictions are accomplished’).
- ²²⁵ 2 Corinthians 7:1
- ²²⁶ 1 Thessalonians 5:23. See also John 17:17, Romans 15:16, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 5:26-27, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, and 1 Peter 1:2.
- ²²⁷ 1 Corinthians 1:30-31. If we could sanctify ourselves, we would have something to boast of. But we can’t. God must receive all the glory.
- ²²⁸ Acts 13:38-39, Hebrews 7:19a, 10:1-2
- ²²⁹ Galatians 6:13. This is explicitly speaking of the moral law. Also see Romans 2:17-24 and 3:9-19.
- ²³⁰ I think the warning in 1 Corinthians 10:12 (“*Therefore let him who thinks he stands be careful that he doesn’t fall*”) can also apply to our vulnerability to falling for false doctrines of various kinds.
- ²³¹ Jeremiah 31:31-34, Ezekiel 36:26-27
- ²³² Romans 5:20. 1 Corinthians 15:56 says the power of sin is the Law. See also Romans 3:20, 7:5, 8.
- ²³³ Galatians 3:21-22
- ²³⁴ Deuteronomy 27:26, Romans 4:15, Romans 7:9-11, 2 Corinthians 3:5-9, Galatians 2:18
- ²³⁵ The Old Covenant made no distinction between the importance of keeping the moral and the ceremonial law. If you were under the Law, you had to keep both. So by accepting the Law of Moses, the Galatians began observing circumcision (Galatians 5:1-6), and the sabbaths and feasts of the Law (Galatians 4:10). Allowed to continue, they would eventually have become complete Old Covenant followers of Moses, and Christ would have ceased to be of any benefit to them.
- ²³⁶ Galatians 2:19
- ²³⁷ It is incredibly difficult, even impossible, to maintain a mental distinction between law-keeping for justification and law-keeping for sanctification. How can you say that God does not require you to keep the Law to be saved,

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but He does require you to keep the Law to be sanctified? Under that mindset, if you're not able to keep the Law after you're saved, you call into doubt your salvation, making justification of works as well.

The Holy Spirit was not given to enable successful legalism, for that would elevate the Law above the Holy Spirit. It makes law-keeping the end and the Holy Spirit merely a means to that end. You cannot put the new wine of the Spirit in the old skins of the Law, nor should you put the old wine of the Law into the new skins of the Holy Spirit. It must be one or the other, not both. John Bengel wrote, "*The Galatians doubtless imagined themselves to be going more deeply into the things of the Spirit; the flesh may easily be confounded with the Spirit, even by advanced Christians, unless they abide in a pure faith.*"

Fellowship with God is the ultimate goal, and this we now have through the blood of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. There is no need for law-keeping to gain what we already have. If you are saved but feel condemned, you are looking at yourself through the lens of the Law. You need to see yourself the way God sees you: through the lens of the blood of Christ.

²³⁸ Romans 8:3-4. To the legalist, any thought of abandoning the Mosaic Law seems scandalous. It sounds like sin is being condoned, but it isn't really. Remember what Paul said in Romans 3:8: "*Why not (as we are slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say), 'Let us do evil, that good may come?' Those who say so are justly condemned.*" (See also Romans 6:15.) Adding Law to our faith is just an attempt to remove the scandal of the cross.

²³⁹ Romans 8:2-4. This is not antinomianism, but 'pneuma-nomianism.' There is no seeking for loopholes with the law of the Spirit of life, unlike what many have done with the letter of the law of Moses.

²⁴⁰ Galatians 3:24-25

²⁴¹ The Law still has a purpose: to convict men of sin and to lead them to Christ. As the standard, it remains. But the Mosaic Law is eliminated as a *means* of living (Romans 7:1-6). Look at Paul who used to follow the Law "blamelessly" before he was saved (Philippians 3:6). After he was saved he didn't use his salvation as an opportunity to keep the Law more perfectly. Instead, he counted law-keeping a total loss. This is what he meant when he called the Galatians (and us) to "*be as I am; for I am as you are.*" This doesn't give us permission to sin. ("*Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? May it never be!*") But we will not sin as long as we walk in the Spirit.

²⁴² Faith is expectant hope and trust that God will fulfill His promises. It implies there is a period of time before we see the promises fulfilled. Sanctification is appropriated by faith: we do not become perfect right away.

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Galatians 5:5 says we must by the Spirit *wait* for the hope of righteousness. There's no need to hope if we already have what we have hoped for. There is no need for faith then either. But because we wait in hope, we do so patiently.

²⁴³ Galatians 2:20-21. Christ actively lives and works through each believer. Don't spiritualize this away!

Abandoning Fleshly Righteousness

²⁴⁴ Someone who is truly saved does not desire to sin, but does have urges to do sinful things at times. This is an important distinction.

²⁴⁵ Deuteronomy 7:12–24, 28:1–14

²⁴⁶ Notice Jesus told the man, "*One* thing you lack," then He proceeded to mention *four* things: sell all, give to the poor, follow me, take up the cross. What the man lacked was not these things he had to do, but a heart that was fully submitted to Jesus. The man was holding on to his right to himself as much as he held on to his riches and good works.

²⁴⁷ Luke 18:11-12

²⁴⁸ Philippians 3:4–6

²⁴⁹ James 2:10. Likewise, Galatians 3:10 says, "*Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the Law, to do them.*"

²⁵⁰ Matthew 5:20, Isaiah 64:6

²⁵¹ Isaiah 54:17, Romans 3:21-22, 10:3, 2 Corinthians 5:21, James 2:23

²⁵² Philippians 3:8-11

Zombie Ants And The Flesh

²⁵³ Romans 7:15-17

²⁵⁴ Ephesians 5:8-10

Appendix: Concerning Deliverance From Sinning

²⁵⁵ Job 41:5

²⁵⁶ A basilisk was a mythical creature that could cause death at a single glance.

²⁵⁷ 1 John 3:5

²⁵⁸ Matthew 1:21

²⁵⁹ Ezekiel 36:26

²⁶⁰ Romans 11:29

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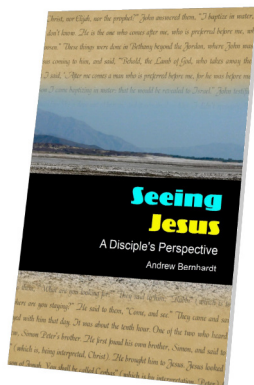
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