



Unconditional Surrender

to

The Spirit



180

A Ministry of Vineyard Columbus

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Introduction

What if the Holy Spirit began working in your life in a new way? What if you stopped trying to work yourself up into an emotional frenzy so that what you feel seems to be a sign of Him being in you? What if you stopped shunning and keeping Him in your small carefully controlled box because He might cause you to do something weird?

What if we recognized that He is God in us and we bow down before Him and unconditionally surrender our bodies and lives to Him to do whatever He wants with us? What if He were free to manifest Himself in our lives in whatever ways He knows we need? I think that would be a good thing. Of course it is always a good thing to come before the God of the universe on His terms and not our own.

We did not come to Jesus and tell Him how He should save us. He knew exactly what we needed and did absolutely everything necessary to give us salvation. Then, He said it was better for Him to go away, back to the Father, so that the Spirit could come and indwell us. Yet, we are trying to tell Him how He can work in our lives? How ridiculous is that? If Jesus can do everything we need for our justification the Holy Spirit can do everything we need for our sanctification, as we work with Him and under His direction. He calls us to work out our salvation with Him and probably we should let Him be the leader and take us where He wants us to go.

The Holy Spirit is God and is equally as much God as the Father and the Son. It must grieve him that so many are so confused about Him and want to make His presence and gifts a point of controversy instead of being filled with Him, bearing His fruit in our lives, walking in Him and using His gifts to edify the Church.

My desire is that you would fall in love with the Spirit. This devotional is a guide for you to read about the Holy Spirit in the Bible and make practical applications in your life. His ultimate goal is to transform you into the image of Jesus Christ. Jesus was Emmanuel, **God with us**, but the Holy Spirit is **God in us**.

His presence in us is a thing of indescribable wonder. Amazing is too small a word to describe it. God the Holy Spirit dwells in you if you have received Christ as your Savior. He is there to help you, to comfort you and to lead you. There is no way at all you can have victory over the flesh except by the power of the Holy Spirit. Your body is His temple and you are not your own you were purchased with the price of the death of Jesus.

Did you ever stop to realize that the first member of the Trinity to be specifically pointed out in the Bible is the Spirit? It was not the Father or the Son that we are introduced to first in the Bible. It was the Spirit hovering over the waters of the chaotic and formless earth.

Interesting isn't it that we tend to think of Him last in the order of the Trinity and, quite frankly, last in importance or value. Yet, as in the Bible, in the day-to-day living out of a Christ-like life His position needs to be first in our life.

I want you to meet the Holy Spirit in a fresh and life changing way through this work. For 31 days you will read different passages about Him with the purpose of falling in love with Him and learning to yield yourself totally to His loving grace and power. This is not a theological defense of Pneumatology (Study of the Spirit). I am trying to open up the meaning of the passages that talk about the Spirit in a way to help us all better understand Him and what He wants to do in our lives.

We, as followers of Jesus, are commanded to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). If we walk in Him we will not fulfill the desires of the flesh. We are to be led by Him and to keep in step with Him and when we do this consistently He bears His fruit in our lives. He makes us more loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle and gives us more self-control.

Give yourself time to read, think, listen, pray and journal the thoughts He brings to your mind as you experience His filling and illumination into what the Scriptures say about Him and about you.

I am a recovering sex addict. My life, ministry and career blew up 5+ years ago when the truth about me became known. Over the past 5 years of recovery He has become, in me, the living and active presence of my Lord Jesus. I have learned to walk by means of His life in me so that I do not fulfill the desires of the flesh. By daily giving Him complete control of my life and surrendering all I am and all I have to His control He has changed me little by little, one day at a time.

How about you? Are you tired of losing the battle with the flesh? Have you grown weary of building your own kingdom and ready to let Him take His rightful place as ruler and leader of your life? Is it time for your Unconditional Surrender to the Spirit?

It is an easier thing to do that when your life has been shattered and you lay broken and realize your true need of His power and life in you. However, it is a much wiser thing if you choose to do that before you have come to the end of your rope. Maybe that isn't possible but either way He is in you and He is God so all things are possible!

I would encourage you to stay in this devotional for 31 days. Make it a priority in your life and daily schedule. Do whatever it takes to establish some discipline in your schedule to meet with Him. You have to admit it would be a good thing to get in the habit of meeting with God everyday. Why not start now?

Day 1 – Genesis 1:1-2

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and **the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters**. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.”

Usually when we read this passage it is with the thought of the creation story. Was it seven literal days or is there room for evolution? Off we go down the theological dialogue of the ages and potentially miss what is so wonderful in this text.

First the obvious – there was a beginning and God started time as we know it and brought into existence the heavens and the earth. Then we usually jump to the 7 days of creation and do not take time to really think about verse 2 and its importance in setting up the 7 days of creation.

Read it again slowly out loud – “Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”

So the earth had been brought into some sort of existence but it was a mess. It was formless. It was empty. It was dark. There was a surface of deep waters. Something was there but it was chaotic. The text says; “The earth was ...” not became.

“Formless and empty...” Keil & Delitzsch (Hebrew Commentary authors) define these words – “The coming earth was at first waste and desolate, a formless, lifeless mass ...”

Sometimes we might think of those words in describing our lives. We say our life is in chaos ... my life is a mess!!! We see people on TV who are hoarders and the inside of their homes look like total chaos. We know people who are wealthy and have everything money can buy but take their own lives because they are empty.

Darkness was over the surface of the deep is a Hebrew expression describing a sea that is filled with turbulence. Again from Keil & Delitzsch; “The chaotic mass in which the earth and the firmament were still undistinguished, unformed, and as it were unborn, was a heaving deep, an abyss of waters and this deep was wrapped in darkness.”

Again that could describe our lives at times. There is chaos and deep heaving. We feel surrounded by darkness and feel that things are totally out of control.

However, in the midst of this we see God the Spirit. What is he doing? He is hovering over the waters. The image there of hovering is of a bird brooding over her young. She broods once the eggs are hatched and there is life there that absolutely needs her attention. So she is constantly feeding, warming and protecting ... brooding. And that is what God the Spirit is doing over this chaotic heaving mess.

Day 2

“Then the LORD said to Moses, “See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and **I have filled him with the Spirit of God**, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts-- to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship. Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, to help him. Also I have given skill to all the craftsmen to make everything I have commanded you;” (Exodus 31:1-6)

The very first time we find God filling someone with the Spirit is for the building of the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle was the place where God’s people were to bring their sacrifices. His presence was in the area called the Holy of Holies. Until the real Temple would be built, many years later in Jerusalem, this is where God was worshipped and the sacrifices were made.

To make sure that things were done exceedingly well the Spirit of God literally filled Bezalel. I imagine that Bezalel was somewhat gifted in these areas to begin with but we really do not know. The text says that God choose him or literally “called him by name”. So Bezalel was chosen to be the master craftsman for the building of the Tabernacle and all of the instruments and furniture to be used in it.

There is a part of me that would like to think maybe Bezalel was not known for having these abilities. He did not have a shop in Egypt where he made stuff like this with artistic and manufacturing skills. Maybe he worked in the chariot body shop sweeping the floor after the skilled workers left for the day. Maybe he and others thought he was not good enough or smart enough to really amount to anything. Now that was probably not the case but it could have been. I cannot make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear ... but certainly God can.

Then, suddenly, Bezalel is filled with the Spirit and God gives him “skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts-- to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship.”

Regardless if Bezalel was already good in these areas or was thought of by others as some sort of dolt unable to connect the Velcro on his sandals the miracle is still there. **He becomes filled with the Spirit of God and what God has called him to do God has empowered him to do so that what is done brings glory to God.** His work is now God working through him. He and God have become a team with both Bezalel and the Spirit of God working in tandem to accomplish what God has in mind.

Did you know that God has a purpose for your life? He made you and formed your DNA. The gifts and abilities you have are by His design whether you have discovered and developed them or not. To fulfill God’s purpose for your life both must be in play.

Day 3

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence **or take your Holy Spirit from me.**” (Psalm 51: 10-11)

It is the setting of this passage that makes it so valuable to us in understanding these words.

Have you ever blown it so badly that you were convinced that your relationship with God surely must be over? You did something so terrible that you believe the patience of God has ended and He has washed His hands of you? Sin, that becomes habitual and takes you to deeper and darker places, leads you in that direction. The spiritual forces of darkness, your enemy, want you to believe that so that you give up trying.

The author of this Psalm is David when he was the king of Israel. He was greatly successful. He had expanded the nation of Israel and made it strong and feared by the surrounding nations. He has killed the giant Goliath and people wrote songs about him.

Yet, when it came time to go out in the spring and fight whatever war was going on, David decided to stay behind in Jerusalem and hang out in the palace – even though the norm would have been for him to be at the battle. David saw a beautiful woman named Bathsheba as she was bathing herself and became overcome by his lusts. He had her brought to him and he committed adultery with her.

When it was discovered that a child was conceived, David had her husband, Uriah, brought home from the battle so he would sleep with his wife and therefore think that the baby was his and the adultery would remain a secret. But Uriah was an honorable man and soldier and refused to go home and instead stayed near the palace. After two tries at this, (number two plan was getting him drunk and sending him home) he still refused. So David sent him back to the front and ordered the commander to put Uriah on the front line and in the most intensive part of the battle, have the other troops pull back so that the enemy would kill him.

So this man after God's own heart, the king and ruler of Israel chosen and blessed by God has given in to lust, committed adultery, tried to cover everything up and had a noble man killed. In one short period of time he has managed to break 40% of the 10 Commandments. So God sends the prophet Nathan to David. Nathan exposes David's sin and David immediately falls apart and is broken before the Lord. God forgives David but the child dies soon afterwards.

It is in this time of his live that David writes Psalm 51. He is broken and devastated. He has done things he never thought he would do. He has been exposed and he cries out for mercy and forgiveness. He asks that the Holy Spirit not be taken from him.

Day 4

“Where can I go from your Spirit?” Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made ..." (Psalm 139:7-14)

In this incredible Psalm David is writing about the omnipresence and omniscience of God. Those are two theological words, which means He is everywhere and knows all things.

In the beginning when the Holy Spirit was brooding over the turbulent waters He was not just in one place but He was everywhere. The same is true today. David is expressing the same thought in relation to his life and the same is true with us. There is no place we can go to get away from the Spirit. We can go to the outer edge of the universe or into the deepest place in the oceans and He is there. We can go as far away as we can go and David says even there His right hand will hold us fast.

If we go into the darkest darkness this world can offer, either literally into the deepest and darkest cavern in the earth or figuratively down into the deepest darkness of sin it is not dark there for the Spirit because He is the source of light. Even in the darkness of our mother's womb when we existed as an egg fertilized by sperm going from two cells into four He was there knitting us together. We are fearfully and wonderfully made.

So there is no place we can go and be away from the Holy Spirit. There is no time in our lives, once we have received Christ, that He is not directly in us and therefore with us. That is why in Hebrews 13:5 we read "God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

One of the ways people with sexual addictions keep from driving themselves crazy is that we learned to compartmentalize. We have one part of our lives with our job and family, church and community involvement and lots of other interactions with other people. Then there is a part of us that is secret. It is a place of darkness. A place we escape and get our fix so we can go back to our other world and make it through the pressures and problems it throws at us.

As our lives develop and we have a family, more responsibility with our job, higher positions in life and in the eyes of others, the pressures of life also increase. There is less time to just relax and do what we want to do. So we escape into our dark place and engage in deeds of darkness. It becomes our drug and coping mechanism where we are in control.

Day 5

Psalm 143 - A psalm of David

- 1 O LORD, hear my prayer,
listen to my cry for mercy;
in your faithfulness and righteousness
come to my relief.
- 2 Do not bring your servant into judgment,
for no one living is righteous before you.
- 3 The enemy pursues me,
he crushes me to the ground;
he makes me dwell in darkness
like those long dead.
- 4 So my spirit grows faint within me;
my heart within me is dismayed.
- 5 I remember the days of long ago;
I meditate on all your works
and consider what your hands have done.
- 6 I spread out my hands to you;
my soul thirsts for you like a parched land.
Selah
- 7 Answer me quickly, O LORD;
my spirit fails.
Do not hide your face from me
or I will be like those who go down to the pit.
- 8 Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love,
for I have put my trust in you.
Show me the way I should go,
for to you I lift up my soul.
- 9 Rescue me from my enemies, O LORD,
for I hide myself in you.
- 10 Teach me to do your will,
for you are my God;
may your good Spirit
lead me on level ground.

I printed most of this Psalm because I wanted you to read the verse about the Spirit in context. I also thought we can relate with what David is feeling. He is crying out for mercy and asks the God of Faithfulness and Righteousness to come to his relief. His enemies are pursuing him and he feels defeated. He is dismayed and discouraged much like we have been when our own efforts to stop sinning have failed once again.

Then in verse 5 he remembers what God had done in his life. He meditates on what the Lord has done not only for him, but also in the history of Israel. Then, and this is very important, **he opens his hands to the Lord and realizes that he is dehydrated from his lack of drinking deeply from the living waters of God.** (The term at the end of verse 6 “Selah” is a literary instruction to stop and think about what has just been said.)

I can remember being at that place in my spiritual journey when I was living a double life and walking in the flesh. I wanted to stop and cried out to God promising once again that I would stop. I failed over and over and became so discouraged and defeated. Even though I was still in ministry I was dried up and parched.

I only wanted God some of the time. I still wanted to live my life my way and was not ready to totally surrender to Him. He stayed with me and allowed me to experience the consequences of my choices. Fleeting momentary pleasure became a habit. I craved the narcotic of the mind brought on my sexual immorality. I escaped and lived for a while in a world where I was in control and got what I wanted. Then it was back to reality until the cravings brought this dog back to his own vomit.

Why do we choose death when God offers us life? Why do we sacrifice the peace and joy that comes with obedience and makes life rich and worth living for sin that thrills for the moment but carries with it the baggage of guilt, fear and self loathing?

As I shared in my devotional, 40 Days of Purity, we have gone from eating the delicious grilled rib eye steak of obedience to eating the dog poop sin offers us. We eat poop and call it good. We develop a taste for it and crave it when all along it is still poop.

David then asks God to show him the way he should go. He asks to be rescued and wants to hide himself in the Lord. He surrenders and asks for God to teach him His will and reinforces the idea that God is his God and asks the Spirit to lead him on level ground.

Whenever we choose to live in sin ... when we cherish it in our hearts and secretly do not let it go, we place ourselves on very unstable ground. Our path is unknown and dangerous. There are countless ways we can get tripped up and fall. We have to be extremely careful about what we say to make sure our lies are covered up. We expend all of our energy keeping up the façade and become exhausted.

On the other hand there is walking by means of the Spirit. When you have come clean and confessed to others the truth, vomited it all out and let the light into your deepest

Day 6

“...till **the Spirit is poured upon us** from on high,
and the desert becomes a fertile field,
and the fertile field seems like a forest.

Justice will dwell in the desert
and righteousness live in the fertile field.

The fruit of righteousness will be peace;
the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.”
Isaiah 53:15-17

In this passage Isaiah is telling us what it will be like when the Spirit is poured out on the desolated land of Israel. I have included it in this work because He can and will do the same in our lives.

Five years ago I was in the first day of recovering from the destruction my choices of sexual sin brought into my life and the lives of my loved ones. We were reeling in shock and the emotional pain was almost more than we could stand.

I did not need the Spirit to be poured out on me because He was already in me. However, my actions had the effect of grieving and quenching Him. This is what we do to Him when we sin. Let me explain that from the New Testament.

In Ephesians 4:25-31 Paul tells us; “And **do not grieve the Holy Spirit** of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” This verse is in a passage where Paul is telling us to not continue in the old sins that we did before we came to Jesus. We are to stop lying, embracing anger and stealing. These are things, as well as anytime we choose to sin, that grieve the Spirit.

The word “grieve” is a strong word in the Greek. It is used in passages where people are deeply emotionally burdened or distressed. It can mean to experience deep sorrow. As a father is grieved when he sees one of his children choose a lifestyle of rebellion and sin instead of following Christ so the Spirit is grieved when we choose to walk in the flesh and sin instead of walking by His power in our lives.

Quenching the Spirit is a warning from 1 Thessalonians 5:19. In a list of things we are supposed to be doing it is mentioned. This involves not doing what the Spirit tells us to do. So if He shows you something in the Bible or speaks to you in a sermon or clearly tells you something you need to do and you ignore Him - He is quenched. Literally you are putting out His fire.

Day 7 -

“As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and **I heard him speaking to me...**” Ezekiel 2:2

To really get the flavor of this passage you need to read Ezekiel chapter 1. Ezekiel the prophet is being shown things by the Lord that are amazing. God is preparing him for what He is going to ask him to say to the rebellious nation of Israel. He gives Ezekiel a vision of the Lord that is inspiring and powerful.

However, what really stands out in this passage is the interaction Ezekiel has with the Spirit. The Spirit comes into Him. The Spirit raises him to his feet and He speaks to him. Now the Spirit is mentioned a number of times in the Old Testament. He comes **upon** people like Saul and Samson but here it clearly says he came **into** Ezekiel.

The reason this is important is because in the New Testament in Acts 2 we find that when the Spirit came at Pentecost, while the disciples of Jesus were gathered and praying, the Spirit filled all of them. Then, throughout the book of Acts, when people believed, having the Spirit come into the believers became universal to all.

In Ephesians 1 Paul writes that the Spirit comes into every new believer at the point at which they believe and He seals them and is God's deposit guaranteeing that we are going to inherit heaven when we die. (More on this later)

For today I want us to see the three things that the Spirit did with Ezekiel. The Spirit came into him, He raised him to his feet and He spoke to him. The Spirit does these three actions to Ezekiel. There is a relationship here that physically impacts Ezekiel. He is filled. He is raised to his feet. He hears the Spirit speak to him.

Doesn't it seem like this aspect of the Spirit is missing in many believer's lives? When was the last time you felt the Spirit filling you, moving you into some sort of action and speaking to you?

The first 30 years of my Christian life were spent in an association of churches where the word of God, the Bible, the Scriptures were rightly understood to be the inerrant and inspired words of God. We based everything we believed and did on the Scriptures. I learned Hebrew and Greek so I could work in the original languages and was taught the science of hermeneutics so that I could rightly divide the word of truth. We were taught the rules of exegesis, how to properly interpret the passages as well as a great framework of theology to help us understand what others before us have learned.

Now I will always be grateful for that education and emphasis on the Bible. However, there was and still is a problem. There was so much of a focus on the Bible and little effort, by comparison, to teaching us how to build a real relationship with the Spirit. In fact we were warned of the abuses of this, done by other parts of the body of Christ,

with a spirit of fear that we would become too emotional and subjectively swayed by improper influences. So the objective Scriptures took center stage and the Spirit was asked to stand in the shadows. For many, myself included, we became men of the Word, filled with knowledge of the truth and remained infants in knowing how to walk in the Spirit and not fulfilling the desires of the flesh.

The Spirit was actively involved in Ezekiel's life and ministry. He was involved in everything that Jesus did. He filled the church and empowered the apostles and disciples of Jesus. He was there at Creation and will be here forever. Can we really say that during this time, the Church Age, that because we have the completed Bible we no longer need an active and intimate relationship with the Spirit? Do we elevate the Bible over the author of the Bible? Seems dumb to me.

If we really do not need the Spirit because we have the completed Word of God then why did Jesus say it is better that He goes away so that the Spirit can come? If we so elevate the Bible and minimize the filling and working of the Spirit in our lives out of a fear of something does that not seem wrong for the follower of Jesus. Let me illustrate this from the book of Romans.

In Romans 7 Paul talks about the problem that all of us are familiar with in trying to stop sinning. We do not do what we want to do but instead do the thing we hate. There is much debate about who Paul is talking about here. Is it an unbeliever? Was it Paul before he was a believer or as a new believer. Certainly a mature believer would not struggle in this way. I believe the strongest case can be made that Paul was talking about himself as a believer. The one thing missing in the entire passage is that there is no mention of the Holy Spirit. It is the believer trying to live for Christ by obeying the law in his own strength instead of by the Holy Spirit.

Listen, the Holy Spirit is not some option we do or do not need to be a follower of Jesus. We cannot just believe in Jesus, be saved, justified and born again and live the rest of our lives trying to read and obey the Bible. We will utterly fail if we do not unite the Spirit of God with the Word of God and depend on His presence and filling in our life as well as a learning and obeying His word.

Yes, we need to abide in Him and in His word. We need the word of God to dwell in us richly. It is the breath of God and contains everything we need for living the Christian life. However, we equally need the filling and empowering of the Spirit. We need his fruit and His gifts. We need Him to fill us, the actively lead us and even to speak to us both through His word and through thoughts and ideas he might say into our minds.

Now for some of you a huge red flag just went up. The Spirit does still speak today. Are there people who think they heard the Spirit but use that to do something totally unbiblical? Sure, and that is obviously not what I am talking about here. When we get what we think is a word from the Lord it needs to be in agreement with Scripture and it is

Day 8

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And **I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.**” Ezekiel 36:27 NIV

In this passage Ezekiel is speaking to the people of Israel about what God is going to do in the future. It is also, in essence, what He has done for us when we became believers in Jesus as our Savior.

Again, we read that God will put His Spirit in us. The Holy Spirit is in you. Your body is His Temple. That is such an amazing thought that we have grown used to. It should shock us with awe and deep reverence. However, we are so used to the idea and we have sinned against Him and rebelled against him so often that we are more used to ignoring Him instead of being filled with Him.

Isn't it strange the things we value and give ourselves to? In Ohio we love football. Over the weekend we can spend hours watching college football on Saturday, semi-pro football on Sunday, another game Sunday night and another on Monday night. It is conceivable that one has watched 7 games in those three days and spent 21 hours worshipping at the altar of the pigskin. That is 30% of those 72 hours given to football.

Some of us love our homes and we spend the weekend fixing up or remodeling it. We spend hours landscaping and caring for our castle. Maybe it is your car. Washing and waxing it and doing repairs takes time out of our days. Then there is work to which we will give at least 8 hours five, six or even seven days a week. What we value we give time to.

However, what could be more valuable than having the Spirit of God dwelling in you? The same Spirit that brooded over the chaotic mass of earth lives inside of you. He is there to bring order into your messed up life. He is there to bring His strength into your weakness, His light into your darkness and His love into your selfishness.

Imagine that you had a super smart phone and with it you could call anybody in the world and they would answer and give you the best advice in the world. You could call Bill Gates if you had a problem with your computer. Call Jimmy Buffett to get advice on how to invest your money. Call Dr. Phil to deal with your emotional problems. Call Jillian Michaels (Biggest Loser) to help you lose a few pounds. If someone had that capability and did not use it you would think they were a fool.

And yet, how foolish of us to have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us and available to us 24/7 and not be calling out to Him and yielding to Him and walking in Him every second of everyday.

Day 9

“So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, **but by my Spirit,**' says the LORD Almighty.” Zechariah 4:6 NIV

These are words spoken by an angel to Zechariah about Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was the man put in charge of rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem after it had been destroyed. Inside the Temple was a lamp stand with 7 lights and it was to be burning continuously. The priests in the Temple made sure there was a steady supply of olive oil and kept the wicks trimmed so the flame never went out.

However, in the vision that Zechariah is seeing there is nobody tending the lamp and yet the fire was never going out. It was a miracle that had a message for Zechariah and for us.

Have you ever had a task that you knew was beyond you? You knew you did not have what it takes to do the task. However, being men we cannot admit that so on we go doing what we can and faking the rest. We are raised with the idea that we should be able to do almost anything and so feel inferior when it comes to doing things we have had little training in doing. We are not Bob Villa when it comes to fixing things around the house. We might be able to change the oil in our cars but beyond that forget doing repairs. Most of us not only do not have the training but do not have the tools needed as well.

One of the most important things to realize in our struggle with not sinning sexually is we must understand that we cannot do it by ourselves. It is not by our might or by our power. We look back at years of trying, making promises, recommitting ourselves to another effort to stop only to find that our best of intentions fall short again.

We can become so discouraged in our repeated failures. Some give up trying and hope to keep the addiction and damage to a minimum. We justify it by saying well it is only porn. At least I am not having an affair or using prostitutes. We buy the lie that the real problem is in us. We are worse than others. We are failures because we cannot stop when others are able to.

If you have reached the end of your might and your power congratulations, you are now ready to find the answer. It seems like we have to come to the end of ourselves before we are able to experience the power of God. Alcoholics and drug addicts have been saying this for years. Our lives have become unmanageable. We have found out we are powerless. We must look to our higher power for what we do not have in ourselves.

At 180 we believe that higher power is the God of the Bible. He is God the Father, God the Son – Jesus Christ and God the Spirit. One God yet manifested in three personages. And the one part of the Holy Trinity who is **given to us to make the difference in our lives in this daily battle against sin is God the Spirit.**

Day 10

“This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child **through the Holy Spirit**. But after he had considered this, an angel of the LORD appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her **is from the Holy Spirit**.”

Matthew 1:18 - 20 NIV

Some say that the greatest miracle of all miracles associated with the life of Jesus is not the resurrection but the incarnation. That moment when the eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient Son of God went from His existence as the second member of the Trinity to becoming a two-cell fetus within the womb of Mary. That is the greatest example of all time of downsizing.

Notice who is there to make sure everything happens the way it is supposed to. Twice we are told that it was the Holy Spirit supervising the operation. Just as He was there brooding over the chaotic mass of the earth before Christ finished creation so the Spirit is there bringing into existence within Mary's womb the Son of God in fetus form. Then, nine months later Jesus is born.

It seems strange to me that this most momentous event is rarely written about in commentaries. There are volumes of works about Mary, the angel, Joseph and the birth, but hardly anything written about this point of incarnation and the role of the Spirit.

We learn from the announcement of the angel that Mary was chosen to be the vessel that God would use to perform this incredible task. She was told that she was highly favored, that the Lord was with her and that she had found favor with God. She was also told that she would give birth to the Messiah, the Son of the Most High and that he would reign over the house of Jacob and his kingdom would never end.

The angel is making this stupendous announcement and the everlasting consequences that will take place as a result, like most men we are great at the “what if” scenario, while Mary is more concerned with the immediate, obvious issue. She asks how this can be since she was still a virgin. That reminds me so much of home. I can be saying to my wife ... honey if this happens then that will happen which will result in another thing and on I go planning into the future and my wife's question is usually – “...but what about this?” The “this” is something I have overlooked or just assumed with take place.

For Mary the “this” was her state of being a virgin. How can a virgin have a baby? So the angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God." He basically says – Mary, what you cannot do the Spirit can do. He will make it happen.

Day 11

"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.**" Matthew 3:11 NIV

Today we are going to consider an issue that is a universal experience of all believers in Jesus Christ. It is a great and marvelous thing and yet has been a very divisive issue between churches and Christians. I think it must grieve the Spirit that this wonderful work that He is so intimately involved with in the life of every believer has become a source of argument and division among followers of Jesus who are supposed to be unified. The world is supposed to know we are Christians by the way we love each other and yet we fight and separate, breaking the unity of the body, over so many misunderstandings and this is one of them.

There are those, on one side, whose primary concern is what does the Bible teach exactly on this issue. I am so glad we have believers like this who give themselves to a lifetime of study, who learn the disciplines of the original Greek and Hebrew languages, systems of theology and proper tools of interpretation. They do the work necessary to leave no stone unturned and want to rightly divide the word of truth. They have been so important and necessary to make sure we do not fall into things that are not true. They have guarded the faith for centuries and have battled against heresy from outside and inside the church walls. The downside of this group can be the temptation to develop such a head knowledge of the bible and theology and not have an intimate growing heart knowledge and experience a day-by-day walk with the Lord.

Then there are those on the other side who love and value the Bible just as much as those just mentioned but their primary concern is their experience. Something has happened to them that they cannot deny. God has touched and changed them and there is a deep love and devotion to Jesus. They are more interested in experiencing Jesus in their day-to-day lives and are not as concerned if they interpret every passage correctly especially if that interpretation is in conflict with their deeply valued experience. The downside here is that one values their experience even if it seems to be in contradiction to the word of God.

It would be a great thing if we could all embrace both the desire to rightly understand exactly what the word of God teaches us about all things as well as have a daily intimate walk with Jesus through the filling and transforming work of the Spirit. This should be the goal of all of us. If it can be a both / and situation then it is a win / win.

News flash – the author of the Word of God is the Spirit and the clear and objective teaching of the Spirit is the Word of God. Now having said that in my attempt to either bring both sides together or perhaps make everyone mad, let's look at the text.

Day 12

“As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw **the Spirit of God descending like a dove** and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” Matthew 3:16 NIV

This is a dramatic moment in the life of Jesus. He has lived in relative obscurity for around 30 years in the small town of Nazareth. He has submitted himself to the authority of his parents and we assume worked with his father who was a carpenter. There are no records of him doing miracles or anything to draw attention to himself. Just a quiet peaceful existence with the most commotion coming from the Jewish mothers of the community playing matchmakers with Jesus and their daughters.

We are not told how but in some fashion Jesus knew the time had come to begin his ministry and the 3-year journey that would lead to his crucifixion. So he goes out to the river Jordan where John the Baptist is immersing people with his baptism of repentance. There was a crowd there but Jesus, in his wonderful humility, stands in line and waits his turn. Finally, he is next and enters the water and comes up to John the Baptist – his cousin.

John, of course, recognizes him and who he really is and says; “I cannot baptize you for I am not even worthy to untie your sandal.” John is pointing out the reality that because Jesus is the Son of God, who has no need to repent of anything nor a need to prepare himself for the coming of Messiah ... since he was Messiah, that John is not even worthy to take position of a slave who might have the job of untying his sandal.

Jesus simply tells him to let it be so for now ... or just go ahead and dunk me. So Jesus places himself in John’s hands and John lowers Jesus down into the water and raises him back up again.

Matthew is specific to point out that at that moment, the moment Jesus is coming up out of the water, something miraculous happens. First, heaven was opened. Then the Spirit descends from heaven down onto Jesus like a dove and lastly the Father speaks.

For a moment let’s imagine what this moment might have been like for Jesus. Jesus, Son of God and co-existent with the Father and the Spirit has left his place in Heaven to be born as an actual man. He has lived 30 years as a human being and though we do not know to what extent he had communication with the Father and the Spirit suffice it to say it was different than it had been from eternity past.

So the time has come for Jesus to begin his ministry, which in essence is starting his journey to the cross where he will be brutally murdered. So just as he is taking the first public step of being baptized the Father and Spirit are right there with Him.

Day 13

“Then Jesus was **led by the Spirit** into the desert to be tempted by the devil.”

Matthew 4:1

The first 7 words of this verse seem very normal to us. After Jesus was baptized and the Spirit came upon Him to start His ministry the Spirit is leading Him just as He intends to lead us. It is the next 9 words that might seem strange if we are not familiar with the story of the temptation of Jesus.

Jesus has come to break into a kingdom that was already in place. Jesus is an insurgent dropped behind enemy lines to overthrow the reigning ruler – the prince of the power of the air, the head of the forces of spiritual darkness, so why not have a showdown right from the start.

Satan tried to have Jesus killed at birth by having all the male children born in Bethlehem murdered, but Mary and Joseph escaped with Jesus into Egypt. Now he is about 30 years old, a healthy man ready to begin to overthrow the powers of darkness on the earth ... so let's get ready to RUUMMMMMBBBLLLEEEEE!!!!

In this corner, in the black trunks, we have Lucifer, prince of darkness, most powerful of all the angels, Father of Lies, leader of multitudes of demons and equipped with all the powers of evil, undisputed king of destruction and undefeated champion of this world.

And in the other corner, in the white trunks, we have the neophyte of Nazareth, that good guy from Galilee - Jesus; the eternally existent Son of God – but now in completely human form, having no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he is despised, and we esteem him not. (See Is. 53)

Ok men – we do not expect a fair fight; after all this is Satan we are talking about here. Satan you are required to sit in your corner for 40 days while Jesus has nothing to eat and wanders around in the blazing hot sun of the desert fasting so as to deplete all of his strength, increase his fatigue factor to the maximum and eliminate almost all of his human strength and mental capabilities.

So that is the setting that the Spirit leads Jesus into. We imagine that the Spirit will only lead us into good things. However, He leads us wherever the sovereign will of God will take us to accomplish His purpose in our lives. For me, that has been to walk through a lot of pain and personal struggle. He has led me through many great and wonderful blessings and through some very dark and depressing times. Yet, it has been the tough times where I have learned the most and changed the most.

Day 14

“But if **I drive out demons by the Spirit of God**, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” Matthew 12:28 NIV

Jesus was such a rebel in the eyes of the religious establishment. The Pharisees hated him because He made them look bad in the eyes of the people. In this chapter a number of things have happened that have rocked the boat of the religious leaders.

First Jesus' disciples are walking through a field of wheat on the Sabbath and they pick the heads of grain to eat them. That was a violation of what the Pharisees believed about doing work on the Sabbath but Jesus' response puts them in their place. Then, he heals a man with a shriveled hand in the Synagogue on the Sabbath – another violation of their law, but Jesus reminds them that they do work on the Sabbath if it means saving a sheep. Isn't a man more important than a sheep? It is ok with Jesus to do good on the Sabbath.

Lastly they bring to Jesus a man who is demon possessed as well as being blind and mute. Jesus not only casts out the demon but also gives him sight and the ability to talk. A pretty good day for that guy but the response of the leaders was that Jesus could do this, casting out the demon, because His power came from Satan. Believe it or not this is the most offensive thing they could ever have said and we will look at that tomorrow as Jesus informs them about the unpardonable sin. However, there is much for us to learn in just this verse.

One thing we need to always understand is that the power of God is always greater than the power of evil. Add together Satan and all of his demonic forces and they are not even anywhere close to being as powerful as Jesus. This is the all-powerful one against a limited amount of power. It is no contest the power and authority of Jesus over any and all forces of evil. Here is just a very limited illustration that does not even do justice to the mismatch – but it is like the Ohio State Buckeyes starting varsity football team playing against the peewee flag football team of 5 year olds.

So understand that in our battle against demonic forces the power of He who is in us is infinitely more powerful than he who is in the world. When Jesus cast out demons it was by the Spirit of God and that same Spirit dwells in every believer. That same power and authority have been given to us so we do not need to live in fear of evil and demons.

However, notice where Jesus takes that thought. He says “...if I cast out demons by the Spirit (which he did and had just done again) then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” When Jesus came to the earth and began his ministry of teaching, healing, casting out demons and doing miracles the kingdom of God began breaking into the kingdom of Satan.

Day 15

“And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but **the blasphemy against the Spirit** will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but **anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.**” Matthew 12:31 – 32 NIV

Ever since the church began and John penned these words people who have worried about committing the unforgiveable or unpardonable sin. It would be interesting to survey a group of believers to see what they think this sin is. I am sure we would get an interesting list of sins.

Later we will be looking at how we sin against the Spirit when we grieve Him and stifle Him, but this sin is called “blasphemy” and Jesus says it is speaking against the Holy Spirit and it will not be forgiven in this age or in the age to come.

Have you ever worried that you have committed this sin? When you promised God that you would never do something again and you did it again was that it? Is it when someone turns their back on God and walks away from everything Christian and rejects Christ? What exactly is this sin? I can assure you it is neither of those two things.

Since Jesus does not just plainly say; “This sin of blasphemy against the Spirit is _____!”, we have to learn from the context of the passage what the sin is.

The word “blasphemy” literally means – “to speak to harm” It means to bring into ill repute and so to slander, to defame (to harm ones reputation by libel or slander), speak evil about. It can also mean to blacken someone’s reputation. So with that in mind where is blasphemy being committed against the Spirit in this passage?

The setting is the passage from yesterday. Jesus has cast demons out of a man and healed him from blindness and gave him the ability to speak (he was a mute). The Pharisees saw how amazed the people were at what Jesus did and so they are trying to discredit Jesus by saying He was able to cast out these demons because Jesus was using Beelzebub – the prince of demons. So they were saying it was basically one demon throwing another demon out. However, remember, in reality Jesus said it was by the Spirit that he drove out the demons.

So what these people were doing was saying the Spirit was Beelzebub. They were defaming and slandering the work the Spirit did. This is what Jesus meant when He said they were blaspheming against the Spirit.

Now have you ever done that? Have you ever seen the Spirit do something miraculous and attributed it to the demonic? I doubt it. So relax you have not committed the unpardonable sin. This is the only time it is mentioned and is not some other kind of sin you might do or have ever done.

Day 16

“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven **give the Holy Spirit** to those who ask him!” Luke 11:13

I strongly believe that we do not ask our Father for enough. It may be out of shame. We feel unworthy of His love and blessing because of our failures and sins. So we count ourselves lucky to be one of His children and hide ourselves in the basement promising not to bother Him and hoping He will not punish us too harshly.

What if in reality He is sitting in the living room waiting for us to come to Him so that He can give us everything we really need? What if He is waiting for us to get so sick of ourselves and our sin that something clicks inside of us and like the prodigal son, who got sick of not even having the pig slop to eat, decides to go home and be treated like a servant?

We are convinced that God is waiting to punish us when in reality the consequences of our sin is punishment in itself. Like James MacDonald says; “When God says ‘Don’t’ He means ‘Don’t Hurt Yourself!’”

This passage follows right on the heels of where Jesus was teaching the people that they are to ask and they will receive. They are to seek and they will find. They are to knock and the door will be opened. For everyone who asks receives and everyone who seeks finds and everyone who knocks finds open doors.

Now I have 4 kids and 3 grandkids. I love to give them gifts. I love to give them good gifts that bring a sense of surprise and delight to them when they receive them. I do not experience joy in the fact that I give them a gift. What if they don’t like it? There is no joy in just giving them something. Joy comes to me when I give them a gift that touches them or delights them and they feel something good because of what I gave them. What kind of a father would I be if on Christmas they open their gift to find the proverbial lump of coal and my attitude is “Just be thankful you got anything! After all it is the thought that counts.” How stupid is that!!!!

If my kids ask for a fish I do not give them a snake. If they ask for an egg I do not give them scorpions. Then Jesus says this verse for today. If we as earthly fathers, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to our children how much more will our Father in heaven give us the Holy Spirit.

Think about that. Talk about the most valuable and priceless gift in the universe. Our Father gives us the Holy Spirit. Our Father gives to us the 3rd member of the Trinity to come into us and dwell in us and to be with us forever. There is absolutely no other gift that is even remotely as valuable as the Spirit.

Day 17

“Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is **born of water and the Spirit.**” John 3:5-8

In this passage Jesus is talking with a man named Nicodemus. Nicodemus was one of 70 men who were the religious ruling body of the Israelites. They were called the Sanhedrin. So he is a very well educated man and probably an authority in the Law and the teachings of what we call the Old Testament.

He comes to Jesus at night to have a one on one conversation with Him because Nicodemus wants to know who Jesus is. He knows God is with Jesus because of the teachings and miracles He has done. Jesus does not respond to Nic’s question with a dissertation on who He is but gets to the point of the conversation He wants to have with Nicodemus.

Jesus says; “...no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” Nic is thinking Jesus is ADHD because the conversation was not about who gets to see the kingdom of God but is about Nic’s desire to know who Jesus is. Pharisees are used to leading the conversation and being highly respected for who they are would not be comfortable with someone they are talking to taking the conversation in the direction they want it to go in.

So maybe it is with a little bit of sarcasm in his voice when Nic replies that a full-grown man cannot be born again. It is impossible for him to crawl back into his mother’s womb and come back out again. Maybe Nic is thinking that Jesus may not be the great teacher Nic thought he was with that ridiculous statement about being born again.

So Jesus clarifies his statement. He is not talking about being born by your mother a second time but He is talking about being born spiritually. Jesus says if someone is going to see the kingdom of God he has to be born of water and the Spirit.

Now obviously being born of water is referring to the time when we exit our mother’s womb and the release of the embryonic fluid that surrounded us at the time. So that was our physical birth. Then, if anyone is going to see the kingdom of God they have to be born a second time and that is a birth of the Spirit. This is a spiritual birth that can only be done by the Spirit.

Interesting that we really do not look at our coming into salvation, the moment we believe in Jesus as our Savior and relate that to being born of the Spirit. The focus is on the love of the Father and the sacrifice of the Son and we kind of ignore the Spirit. He is there for our sanctification and helps us grow but we do not usually tie Him to our justification. Yet, Jesus clearly says here that we are born of the Spirit.

Day 18

"If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- **the Spirit of truth**. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." John 14:15-17

It is the night before Jesus is to be crucified. He has gathered with his 12 disciples in an upper room to celebrate the Passover meal. He has said some things to them on the way to Jerusalem that they have not really heard. He has told them that He is going to be killed but they really did not get it. They gather to celebrate this sacred meal and Jesus has just dropped two more bombshells. He tells them that one of them is going to betray Him and then that He is leaving them and they will not be able to follow.

They are deeply troubled. This was a gut-wrenching blow that agitates them to the core. Judas has left having been identified as the traitor and now He says He is leaving them and where He is going they cannot, at this time, follow. They have left everything to follow Him for the past three years. They have been amazed at His teachings and stunned by all the miracles and believe that He is the Messiah who is going to restore Israel and defeat the Romans and all of their other enemies.

Four things strike me right off the bat in this passage. First Jesus says that the Spirit will be our Counselor. Second, He will be with us forever. Third, He is the Spirit of truth. Fourth, He is in us.

Do you see the Spirit as your counselor? Jesus called Him our Counselor. The word in the Greek is "paraclete" which is used in two ways in the New Testament. It is translated as "advocate" when used in 1 John 2:1. It can mean one who speaks on another's behalf, and gives counsel. It also is used to mean one who gives comfort and aide. Here is my question to you...if the Spirit is your counselor **do you talk with Him?** How many people have a counselor, take the time to go to the office, pay a fee and then sit there and do not talk with the counselor. Seems kind of dumb doesn't it?

Do you talk with the Spirit? Do you share your burdens, fears and pain with Him? That is why Jesus has sent Him to you. We talk with ourselves, our friends, our pastors, and even seek advice from paid professionals. Perhaps the one we need to talk with is the Spirit. You might respond; "Yeah – I talk to all those people because they give me their answers ... they talk back to me." So you are saying the Spirit – God is not able to speak back to you? The Spirit does not tell you things or reveal to you ideas or even show you things in the Bible? Perhaps we do not know how to listen to Him

If you have talked with Him have you sat and listened for His answer? Have you sought out His answer in the Scriptures or even sat silently before Him and listened for His voice? Lastly, when He does tell you what to do, do you do it?

Day 19

“But the **Counselor, the Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in my name, **will teach you all things** and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” John 14:26 NIV

This is such a rich passage of Scripture. Jesus gathered with his disciples in the upper room telling them words to help encourage them and prepare them for the days following his crucifixion. When they see him captured, tortured, crucified and buried their entire world will be destroyed. Everything they placed their hopes on and left everything behind for will be gone. They think it is gone forever but in reality for only 3 days.

If Jesus is killed what are is going to do to His followers? They are going to be in the grip of fear and panic running for their lives and hiding, which is exactly what happened. Yesterday we learned about the role that the Spirit is to play as our counselor and comforter. In this passage we learn that He also has a role in being our teacher.

Jesus says that the Father will send the Spirit “in my name”. In other words the Spirit is here at the expressed will of the Father and He is sent to speak for Jesus. He is given the authority to be teaching us in accordance with what the will of Jesus would be. He comes to us and teaches us with authority and according to what the will of the Father and Jesus is.

So what the Spirit teaches us is always in perfect union with the will of the Father and the Son. There is always perfect unity between all members of the Trinity. So the Father and Jesus have sent to us the Spirit and it is His role to be the Teacher. Specifically in this passage He is going to teach the disciples “all things” and He is going to remind them of everything Jesus said to them.

Obviously the reason this was going to happen is so that from some of the disciples, like John, Peter and Matthew, we would have an accurate recording of the things Jesus said and did. When it came time to write the New Testament these men were guided by the Spirit to record exactly what the Spirit wanted to be written in the New Testament.

I would imagine that after 3 years together there were a lot of conversations that they had which could have been a little fuzzy in their minds. How well can you remember a conversation you had with someone 3 years ago? Plus, these men did not record their gospels and letters for a number of years after the resurrection so it was even longer. However, that did not matter because the Spirit, who knows all things, gave these writers the exact words that He wanted them to record so that we could have the inspired and inerrant word of God. (1 Peter 1:20)

Henry Alford’s Greek Testament Commentary says that implied in this idea of helping them remember what Jesus said is also that they would have a right understanding of the meaning of what Jesus said.

Day 20

“But when he, **the Spirit of truth**, comes, **he will guide you into all truth**. He will not speak on his own; **he will speak only what he hears**, and **he will tell you what is yet to come.**” John 16:13 NIV

This is the third time Jesus refers to the Spirit as the Spirit of truth while teaching the disciples about what is going to happen after He leaves them. In John 14 Jesus tells the disciples that the Spirit will help them remember everything He said to them. I doubt if they were taking notes for the three years they spent listening to His teaching. Suddenly He is gone and they realize maybe they should write down what He taught while with them. Instead of being filled with worry that they might not remember exactly what He taught Jesus tells them the Spirit will teach them all things and help them remember everything He said to them.

Now, later in the same evening Jesus again says the Spirit of truth will guide them into all truth. Jesus says that the Spirit will speak to them and what He says to them will only be what He hears from Jesus and he will tell them what is to come.

Later in this devotional we will be looking at how the Spirit did that and what He said. Yet, think with me for a minute about how dependent the disciples were upon the Spirit after Jesus went up into heaven and the Spirit came to fill them at Pentecost. They no longer had Jesus. They had the books of the Hebrew Scriptures but had no gospels or rest of the New Testament. There was no instruction manual on how to build the church and how to develop their faith. Everyday they were totally dependent on the Spirit leading them, reminding them and telling them exactly what Jesus would want them to know.

Nowhere did Jesus teach them that this only applied to the disciples or apostles. In fact later we are taught that we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit. We are commanded to walk in the Spirit. We are told to be led by the Spirit and we are told to keep in step with the Spirit. Jesus also said that the church would receive power from the Spirit to be His witness around the world.

However, so much of the church today is ignoring the Spirit!!! Here is a quote I found from a website whose most important belief is that we rely only on the Scripture. **“The Holy Spirit does not guide us to understand the Bible!”** There are others who seem to believe, based on their ignoring the role of the Spirit in the day-to-day life of the believer that the three members of the Trinity are the Father, the Son and the Bible.

If that is to be the case it would seem to me that Jesus would have told them that after He left them they would have some people write down what He wanted them to know and that is all they would need. Instead the last thing that Jesus told them after the resurrection and before his ascension into heaven was that they would receive power when the Spirit would come upon them.

Day 21

“After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but **in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit**. So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. **But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."” Acts 1:3-8

Here we read about being baptized with the Holy Spirit. How it must grieve the Spirit that this idea of us being baptized with the Spirit has caused so much divisiveness in His Church. The body of Christ, the whole group of people who have been saved by grace through faith in Christ, will argue over this till they are blue in the face and really miss the beauty of these works and the importance of this concept.

Let’s just look at the most basic and simple truths of this passage. They are a group of the 11 remaining apostles and about 120 people who have followed and believed in Jesus. He has appeared on a number of occasions during a period of 40 days giving physical and visible proof that He is alive. They have spoken with Him, some have touched Him and some have eaten with Him. He is alive and He is real!

However, He is going to leave them just as he told them in John 14. Plus, He is leaving them with a mandate. They have a purpose and it is not to return to their former lives but to follow Him and spread the news around the world that He is alive and anyone can have an eternal relationship with God the Father through the finished work of Jesus the Son. There is salvation for all who call upon the name of the Lord – Jesus, and placing faith in Him will eternally change them.

Plus, they were given the command both in Matthew 28:19 and Acts 1:8 – to make disciples and being witnesses around the world. I do not think the average Jew sitting in the Promised Land ever really thought about spreading a message around the world, and now that is the task Jesus has given them.

How will they do that? They will have to be **changed** and **empowered**. There needed to be an internal change as to who they were and an external changed as to how they lived. It is the **baptism of the Spirit** that creates the **internal change of character** and the **filling of the Spirit** that empowers the **external change of behavior!!!**

After about seven days, while they were gathered in one place in Jerusalem both of these things happened to them.

Day 22

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. **All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.**” Acts 2:1-4

What a moment this must have been. It was the birth of the Spirit-filled Church. The Body of Christ gathered in Jerusalem after Jesus has ascended into heaven, waiting, praying not having any real idea about what is going to happen. They are obeying Jesus. They are hopeful. They are afraid and waiting for what God will do next. Maybe that describes you as well.

Then they are baptized with the Spirit and filled with the Spirit. They hear the sound of a violent wind from heaven and it fills the house where they are sitting. Their eyes are wide open because something is happening over which they have no control. Then their eyes see something very strange. Flames of fire appear and separate and come to rest on each one of them. Everyone looks like their hair is on fire!

Then there is something that happens inside of them. They are all filled with the Holy Spirit. I wonder what that felt like for them? Have you ever been in a place of pain and confusion? Have you ever just wished that you felt great and a sense of peace and amazement could just come over you and a warm light would fill the dark and empty coldness? I imagine it was something like that. The essence of light and love has filled them and fear and darkness has immediately vanished. There is an explosion of joy in the room and for some reason everything seems right. God has shown up and He is in total control.

When they start responding to this filling of the Spirit and when they start talking they are speaking in other languages that they have not ever spoken in before. Because it was a great holiday in Jerusalem and many people from all over had gathered there many came to the place the followers of Jesus were. To their amazement they heard these Galileans speaking their own language and declaring how wonderful God is. It is a miracle on a grand scale. Yet some people are skeptical and say it is because they are drunk. I don't know ... seems to me drunk people do not speak better. They slur their words and are not coherent. These believers are fluently speaking languages from another land. In fact, fifteen different people groups are mentioned.

Then Peter stands up and preaches. Peter the impetuous one, the one good at putting his foot in his mouth and who has been known as one who speaks before he thinks is delivering the first sermon. It is a spontaneous message delivered extemporaneously. No notes. No study. No preparation ... not what I would recommend for a preachers first sermon. But he is filled with the Spirit. Jesus said when the Spirit comes they would receive power to be His witnesses and Peter is going with the flow. He is being

Day 23

“Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, **be filled with the Spirit...**” Ephesians 5:15-18

I am jumping to this passage for several reasons. I strongly believe that **the only way** anyone can possibly live a Christ-like life is by being filled with the Spirit. This passage is a universal command to all believers to maintain a life of being filled with the Spirit. From here we will launch into other specific and important passages about the work of the Spirit in our lives.

Paul is telling us that we need to be careful about how we live. The decisions we make everyday are important and so we must not live aimlessly. We are not to be “whatever” people, like when you ask your teenager a question and they answer “whatever!!!” Our lives have great value and we need to be careful to make the most of every opportunity the Lord gives us.

He says we need to be wise and understand what the will of the Lord is. This is the overriding universal will of the Lord for everybody who is a true follower of Jesus. We are to avoid being drunk which will lead us to live lives of sinfully destructive behaviors. Instead, we are to be filled with the Spirit. We are to live under His control and not the influence of anything or anyone else.

First, please note that this is not a one-time event in your life. The Greek grammar clearly shows that this is a command that is to be done constantly. Literally we should translate these words – “...be filled and keep on being filled with the Spirit...”

So how do we do that? Being filled with the Spirit starts with us asking Him to fill us. We are commanded to be filled with the Spirit because it is not an automatic thing. For us to be filled with the Spirit we need to start by asking Him to fill us. It is clearly God’s will and we know that if we ask God for anything that is according to His will He will do that which we ask according to 1John 5:14-15.

So we need to begin everyday asking for the Spirit to fill us. Notice that Paul states that this is the opposite of being drunk with wine. When we consume alcohol we begin to lose control of our thoughts, words and deeds. The alcohol has the affect of removing one’s inhibitions and we think, say and do things we would never think, say or do were not the alcohol controlling us.

The opposite of that Paul says is being filled with the Spirit. When we are filled with the Spirit we will think, say and do things that come from His control in our lives.

Now I know for some that paints a pretty boring picture. We imagine that the choice we have is either to choose to “party” by being controlled by alcohol which looks like fun and excitement or to be controlled by the Spirit which will make us a pious and boring person who is not able to have any fun. However, the truth is the choice you make on a daily basis will have the opposite result.

Choosing to be controlled by what the world has to offer us leads to debauchery. Look past the initial excitement of the moment. It is a choice that, beyond the excitement of moments of sensual pleasure under the control of alcohol, leads us into the garbage dump of life. The word used is debauchery. That is a word describing the lifestyle the prodigal son ended up living. Go to a mission outreach ministry and look out at the broken and addicted people coming for food and shelter and see the results of debauchery. Looks like a party at first but leads to the dump and even death.

There is such an outstanding alternative and that is being filled with the Spirit. If we are going to live a life free from addiction and our propensity to choose that which is sinful we must be controlled by the Spirit. That happens when we are filled with the Spirit. Listen carefully to me when I say that being filled with the Spirit is the only way we will experience the life our Father and our Lord Jesus have for us. Only the Spirit can enable us to overcome the flesh, the world and the devil. He and He alone can transform who we have become by our sinful choices into being conformed into the image of Jesus.

If in your battle with sin you are broken and realize that you cannot change yourself and have failed trying, you will be tempted to be filled with shame and self-loathing. Satan will tell you what a loser you are and that everyone else can handle it but not you because you are worse than everyone else. There is a truth and a lie. The truth is that none of us can handle all of it. We are all broken in some way. The lie is that we are worse than everyone else. No, we are not worse than everyone else. We are all broken and nobody can live the life of a richly blessed believer in Jesus apart from the Spirit.

Admitting that you are totally dependent on the Spirit to have freedom from the sins that entangle you is the best first step you can take to healing. Your battles have failed. Your best efforts and your best thoughts have gotten you to where you are today. You have tried so hard and for so long and have failed. Guess what? That is what is supposed to happen. Our efforts to overcome the besetting sin in our lives apart from God will always fail. God designed it that way so that we would realize that we need the filling of the Spirit everyday and at all times during the day.

So how do we become filled with the Spirit and maintain being filled with the Spirit? I like what I read by Pastor Ray Pritchard. He writes – “We need two things-**emptiness** and **openness**. You can't fill a jar that's already full, and you can't fill a jar that is not open.”

Hopefully by now you recognize that you are empty. Everything we use to fill our emptiness runs out the cracks in the bottom of our broken cisterns. It is a place that can

Day 24

“So I say, **live by the Spirit**, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”
Galatians 5:16

Such a simple command with immeasurable ramifications is in this verse. Literally the word translated here by the word “live” is the word “walk”. Paul literally writes “walk by the Spirit”. The amazing thing is the result this will have in our lives. If we walk by the Spirit we will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. If you have ever wondered how you are going to stop giving in to sinful desires the only answer is to walk by the Spirit.

Listen, the word of God written under the direction of the Spirit through Paul is telling us how it is possible to be able to stop failing when we are tempted and quit choosing to sin. We are all going to be tempted and that will never end until we die. To be tempted is not a sin, but when we make the choice to “gratify” the desire then that temptation has lead us to sin. To gratify means to perform, execute, complete or fulfill. So it means that walking by the Spirit or living by the Spirit is going to stop us from committing the sin our sinful nature desires us to do.

We learned yesterday that everyday and at all times during the day we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit. That is to be the internal condition of every believer. The great news is that He is not just there to give you a warm fuzzy while you are sitting in your study having your quiet time. You have to get up and do whatever needs to be done that day. The kids need your attention. You have to go to work. You have to deal with the traffic, that boss you despise, the job you hate, the spouse you are at war with and the children who have not turned out to be the angels you thought they were before they turned two.

Life is hard and we are constantly in a battle with three enemies – our flesh or sinful nature, the fallen world in which we live and the spiritual forces of darkness or demonic influences that are around us. If Adam and Eve could not keep from sinning in the sinless and perfect Garden of Eden, without having a sin nature or a fallen world – how is it even remotely possible for us given our current set of circumstances? The Spirit is the only answer. His filling and then walking with Him in control of our life is the only way we will begin to see real change in the way we live.

So the most basic question we need to answer and practice is how do I walk in the Spirit and thereby not satisfy the desires of my sinful nature?

The first step, which we looked at yesterday, is we ask Him at the beginning of each day to fill us. Ask the Spirit to take complete control of your life. There must be a willingness in the depth of your heart to completely surrender your life to the Lord and yield everything to Him. If there is an area you have closed off to the Spirit then He is not going to completely fill you. If you are not completely filled then there is an area that you are saying you know better than Him how things should go. Bad idea!

That is one reason I titled this devotional Unconditional Surrender to the Spirit. He wants to be in control of all of us, every part of our lives. Then He can lead us and transform us into the people He wants us to be. If there is still a place of rebellion or selfishness in you He will not be in complete control and you are leaving yourself open for your sinful desires to control you in that area.

So when we are unconditionally surrendered to Him when He fills us He fills all of us and there is not an area that is not under His control. If you ever wonder if you have done that just keep asking Him to reveal to you any area in your life that He is not Lord over. Ask him, like David at the end of Psalm 139 to search you and show you any sinful place in your life.

Then prayerfully ask Him to help you walk in the Spirit. This is something that happens as He enables us to do it. It is not us under our own strength trying to obey a set of rules and regulations – that is like going back to the Old Testament and trying to obey the Law. Been there and done that and have the failures to prove it.

Instead it is yielding to His leading and His control. He wants to transform you into the image of Jesus and if you are surrendered to Him then He is free to work. He will literally begin to transform the way you think and the way you act. Instead of being led by your sinful desires He will walk with you and guide you into doing the right thing. This doesn't happen immediately, it takes practice. It takes learning how to do it one step at a time. There will be times you will fail and still choose to sin. Like learning to ride a bike it is a balancing act that takes practice and learning from our mistakes.

However, when we fall He never gives up on us so do not give up on Him. The longer you work at it the easier and more natural it becomes. I promise you it gets better and the reward of consistently walking in Him is to begin to experience the abundant life Jesus promised in John 10:10.

Holy Spirit – I want to be completely filled by You. I want to walk in you and not fulfill the desires of the flesh. Please show me any area that I have not surrendered to you. What things do I need to eliminate in my life and in the way I live that are keeping me from experiencing your fullness.

Day 25

“For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and **the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature**. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are **led by the Spirit**, you are not under the law.”

Galatians 5:17-18

Sometimes I think; “How many days of my life did I waste thinking I did not need to spend time with the Lord and seek His power in my life?” You never think that on a day-to-day basis. It just becomes a habit. For a period of time you think about getting up and spending that time in prayer and reading the Word and seeking Him and His will for your life. However, like a lot in life, things fade as time passes. Sleep in a little later. Wait till the last minute to get up, rush through the morning routine and get to work. In no time you are engrossed in the demands of the day and forget about the Lord and the battle you are in. Eventually that just becomes the way you live and even failing to deal with temptation and falling into sin becomes part of your day.

This verse reminds us of the stark reality that everyday we are in a battle. If you are walking in the Spirit everyday and being filled with Him during the day He is there to fight the battle for you and you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh. Without Him you do not stand a chance. I know I am repeating myself but wake up to the reality of your life. You are daily going to be under attack from at least three enemies. The flesh, or sinful nature, is going to be leading you to act on your sinful desires – so there is an internal enemy who is daily ready to fight. The world we live in is going to offer to those desires all kinds of things to bring pleasure to dull the pain and boredom of life – so there is an external enemy who is daily ready to fight. Plus, there is a whole demonic world with spiritual forces of evil that want to take you down. Frankly, you do not stand a chance!!!

We have one simple choice to make on a daily basis – fight the enemies ourselves or allow the Spirit to fight the battle for us. Does not our history tell us the results of our fighting the battle? You might win a skirmish in your own strength but you will not win the battle. You may redouble your efforts and white knuckle your way to a few days or weeks of victory but you will lose the war. The longer you might be able to go in your own strength the greater will be the fall and devastation when eventually you are defeated.

Notice one part of that passage – “...the Spirit desires what is contrary to the sinful nature...” Now let me be blunt. There are three entities here. There is the sinful nature, the Spirit and you. You are a new creation in Jesus. You have been saved and set free from the empowering control of your sinful nature. However, until you have walked in the Spirit consistently for a period of time your desires have spent more time with the sinful nature than with the Spirit. Your connection with your sinful nature and satisfying the desires of the flesh is fresh and maybe even regular.

Day 26

“Since we live by the Spirit, let us **keep in step with the Spirit.**” Galatians 5:25

I am skipping the fruit of the Spirit and will talk about that tomorrow. I want to keep our minds focused on what I see as a progression in Paul’s teaching on the Spirit in this passage that I believe will be helpful to us in understanding what it means to be filled with the Spirit and walking in the Spirit.

In working with people struggling to overcome the patterns of sin that have been a part of their lives for years, even decades, I have found many who just keep falling on a regular basis no matter how hard they try to stop. We have already talked about the absolute necessity of needing the Spirit to make this happen. In our own power we will never be able to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil.

On the other hand as we are being transformed by the Spirit into the likeness of Christ and become more godly people we have the responsibility to walk out our salvation make choices daily, even moment by moment, left foot, right foot, left foot, right foot choosing to remain filled with the Spirit and walking in the Spirit.

In this passage of Galatians 5:13-25 Paul mentions the Spirit numerous times and clearly shows that He is the only solution we have to not losing the battle to the flesh and its sinful desires. For years all I really saw in this passage was my need to walk in the Spirit. However, recently I have noticed a progression in the passage that has to do with a deepening intimacy in our walking in the Spirit. Right up front I will say to you that this is an over-emphasis on my part to the text. However, this line of thinking has been helpful to me in my recovery and perhaps it might be helpful to you as well.

Let’s put some thoughts together. First, in Ephesians 5, we are commanded to **be filled with the Spirit**. Second, in Galatians 5, we are commanded to **walk by the Spirit**. Third in the same passage we are told to **be led by the Spirit** and lastly, also in the same passage we are told to **keep in step with the Spirit**.

We have already talked about the moment-by-moment need we all have to be filled and keep on being filled with the Spirit. This is to be our normal state of existence. There should never be a moment when we are not being filled with the Spirit. So the question that begs to be asked is; “How do I do that?” I ask him to fill me everyday and even multiple times during the day but when things happen that seem to trigger me to make the sinful choices I have made in the past it is like He vanishes and my flesh takes over and I follow those old patterns of thoughts and actions that lead me to make sinful choices.

Unfortunately we know that those sinful choices are easily made since over years of time those decisions have become hardwired into our brains. The good news is that the

new choices of remaining full of the Spirit can become hardwired into the brain as well and we have the power of the Spirit to help that happen.

What we need to start to do is train ourselves to turn to the Spirit as soon as we recognize that we are in a moment of temptation. If we are being filled with Him and walking by Him we must realize that we are not alone and He is not far away. He is right there with us in that moment and in that temptation.

The text says walk by the Spirit and literally it means “live by means of” the Spirit, depending on Him as you are going through your day. However, think with me for a moment that you are walking “by” or next to the Spirit, just for sake of illustration. So as we are going through the day we have the Spirit walking along with us and we are in conversation with Him as the day is unfolding.

Suddenly, we find ourselves in a tempting situation. We have started a new diet and the boss brings in donuts. We are striving to live in purity and a co-worker shows up in a revealing outfit. We go to our junk mail account and see an invitation to hook up with somebody for sex. Temptation slams us and it seems like the Spirit has gone and all of our focus seems to be on the sin that is tempting us and our desires are aroused.

At that moment we need to be led by the Spirit. Like my granddaughter reaches out for my hand so we can walk down the stairs together, we need to reach out to take the hand of the Spirit so that He can lead us through this moment of temptation. We have been walking with Him but now, in this moment of danger, we ask Him to take our hand and lead us. Our focus on Him needs to increase and we need to pay more attention to what He is telling us to do. When we do this and the moment passes and we allow Him to lead us to a safe place and do the next right thing then we off go, walking with Him again.

Then, another temptation comes that is more severe. It is one that has caused us to fall many times before. You get home from work early and nobody is home and you are all alone with the computer and longing to go online and look at porn. This moment of temptation is greater simply because you have fallen in it so many times before. Now you not only need to be walking with the Spirit and need to be being led by the Spirit by taking His hand – now you need to “keep in step” with the Spirit. That means you are in a very dangerous situation and you need to only put your next step in the place that He has stepped before you. Picture yourself walking in a minefield. The only safe place for your next step is putting your foot where His has been. It is not safe enough to just take His hand and walk along beside Him. You get behind Him, slow down, and carefully place your foot only where His has been.

Now do you see the progression in the passage? If we can begin to pray that way during our day and as we face temptations it will make a difference in overcoming the sins that so easily have been able to make us fall. So many times we fly off into our day

Day 27

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.** Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

Galatians 5:19-24

How do I know if I am filled with the Spirit and walking in the Spirit? That is really an easy question to answer isn't it? This passage shows us that the way to determine whether we are walking in the Spirit or in the flesh is to look at what is happening in our actions, thoughts and feelings.

If I am involved in or thinking about sexual immorality, idolatry, witchcraft, hating others, creating dissension, being jealous, exploding with rage, trying to promote myself and climbing over others, being divisive, envying others, getting drunk and things like that then I am allowing the flesh to control me. All these things are destructive to me and others around me.

He also says that if this is my way of life, this is the way I consistently choose to live without repentance and fighting to stop then I may not even be a Christian. Now I am in no way saying that by not doing these things I will go to heaven when I die. That would be making my salvation based on works and we know that is never true. Certainly there is at least one thing in this list, maybe more, that you struggle with. That does not indicate you are not a believer – but that you are walking in the flesh and not the Spirit.

In stark contrast are the fruit of the Spirit. As we live our lives as followers of Jesus, one day at a time, left foot, right foot, walking in the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit He is gradually conforming us to the image of Christ and these are the thoughts, actions and feelings we will begin to see in our lives.

I remember the first time I went with my dad to pick strawberries. We went to a farm, got our baskets and went out to the field lined with plants. They were all close to the ground and had a lot of green leaves, but when you got down on your knees and lifted up the leaves there were ripe, fat and juicy strawberries just yearning to be picked. Not all the berries were ready and some were small and still had some green or whiteness on them. That only made it more exciting when you found those big and fat ones that looked ready to explode with juice and flavor. I must admit more than one found its way into my mouth instead of the basket.

It is exciting to find fruit and even better when the fruit is fully ripened and ready to pick. We had three different types of peach trees in our front yard in Arizona. They all

Day 28

“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” Ephesians 4:30

In the passage where we find this command (Ephesians 4:17-32) Paul is teaching us to not live like unbelievers but to live like followers of Jesus. Like the two lists in Galatians 5 – the fruit of the flesh versus the fruit of the Spirit, he exhorts us to stop doing things that we see unbelievers doing, and which we did ourselves, and to be Christ-like.

However, we learn something very important from this passage. We learn that the things we say and do can grieve the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us. The word “grieve” means to cause someone deep emotional pain or sadness. It is applied to God in several places in the Old Testament that shows us how strong a word it really is.

When God saw the extent to which the human race had fallen into sin in the days of Noah He was grieved and destroyed the creation with the Flood (Genesis 6:6). When God saw the way the Israelites rebelled against Him in the wilderness after leaving Egypt their actions grieved Him (Ps. 78:40) and He “loathed” that generation (Ps. 95:10).

Have you ever noticed what someone does who is grieved? They immediately recoil and a pulling away. In the film Private Ryan there is a scene where the government sends someone to tell Mrs. Ryan that 3 of her 4 sons have been killed in battle. It is like someone has hit her in the stomach. She bends over in grief unable to stand and has to sit down because the powerful emotion of being grieved has come over her.

It is sort of shocking that Paul uses this word in relation to the Spirit and the effect our sinful choices have upon Him. What is it that grieves the Spirit? Even a casual look at the context of the verse shows us a lot. The verse that follows says; “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.” Bitterness, wrath, anger clamor, slander and malice would not probably make the top 10 list of sins we think are offensive to God. Yet, these are the things that grieve the Spirit.

Now notice that Paul reminds us that we are sealed with the Spirit until the day of redemption. He is not going anywhere. He will never leave us or forsake us. However, when He is grieved I cannot help but imagine that He backs off a little. When we choose to sin and not allow Him to work in our lives He is grieved. When we decide to do what He does not want us to do it grieves Him and He recoils a little.

He is there to help us. He is ready to give to us His power and grace. He is there to fill us and lead us and enable us to choose to not sin. We can live yielded to Him and walk in Him and not fulfill the desires of the flesh. He is then able to produce His fruit in our lives and give to us the full and abundant life the Father has for us. Each and everyday

this is a possibility for us, unless we choose to rebel, to go it alone and try to live our lives apart from His leading. Then He is grieved, backs off and allows us to experience the consequences of our wrong choices.

If you are a parent you know what that is like. You have a child, perhaps a teenager who is making bad choices. You know where those choices might lead them. You realize that the wrong people influencing their lives could lead to drug and alcohol abuse, sexual sin and being exposed to sexually transmitted diseases. Long before that place is reached you try to step in and talk with them about the people they are hanging with and where that might lead them. You do it out of great love and compassion hoping to spare them the pain that is down that road. However, they think you are trying to control them and take all the fun out of their lives. They walk away telling you to leave them alone, go to their room and slam the door shut. You are stunned and grieved and do not know what to do next.

Yet, there is a rebellion like that in our own lives. The Spirit is telling us the things we need to stop doing. His word and His presence in your life have made it clear there are things that are hurting and destroying your life and relationships. Yet, off we go and continue doing the things He has warned us about and the very one who has the power to enable us to change is grieved, recoils and waits for us to repent and allow Him to take control of our lives.

Are there things the Lord has told you to stop doing? Ignoring Him is that last thing we should be doing. We choose to go our own way and it always leads to problems and a life void of His fruit and His power. For example, the best statistics out there tell us that pornography is a huge issue in the lives of Christians. The best estimates are that 50% of all Christian men are addicted ... addicted I say again – to porn and 20% of all Christian women say it is a problem for them. How grieved must the Spirit be and the inroads sexual sin has made within the body of Christ.

Holy Spirit – is there anything in my life that is grieving you? Please show me what grieves you and help me to change. Show me the steps I need to be taking and the courage to take those steps. I do not want you to be grieved – I want you to be in complete control of all my thoughts, words and deeds today.

Day 29

“Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.”
1 Thessalonians 5:19

Tucked away in the closing words of this letter Paul wrote to the believers in Thessalonica is a list of commands. This translation uses the word “quench” in relation to something we must not do with the Spirit. When I hear the word quench I think of when I am thirsty and grab a cold bottle of water from the refrigerator or a bottle of Gatorade out of a cooler floating in a sea of ice. Crack the lid and pour the cool liquid down my throat and that feeling I was having relative to thirst is a thing of the past. The liquid quenches or “puts out” or silences my thirst for a season.

In Paul’s day this word was used for extinguishing a light or a flame. Figuratively it meant to stop, thwart or block an activity. Paul uses this word in Ephesians when he is writing about the full armor of God and the shield of faith with is able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

So, why would Paul command them, and through him the Spirit commands us, to not quench or extinguish the Spirit? The Greek would seem to indicate that he is commanding them these five things because he was addressing things already happening in the congregation. These words are addressed to everyone in the church and apparently they were quenching the Spirit. They were despising prophetic utterances, they were not examining things carefully and holding fast to that which is good and they were not abstaining from every form of evil.

How do we quench the Spirit? How does this command apply to us? We saw yesterday that we grieve the Spirit when we do what He commands us to not do. When we choose to follow the desires of our flesh instead of the leading of the Spirit He is grieved and to a degree recoils in our life.

Quenching Him is the opposite. We quench the Spirit when we choose to not do what He tells us to do. These are not separate events in the life of a believer. I believe they are closely connected. Let me explain. We are asking the Spirit to fill us in a continuous way through our day. We offer ourselves to Him fully each day and give ourselves to Him asking for His filling. We tell Him we want to walk in the Spirit so that we do not fulfill the desires of the flesh. We ask Him to take our hand and lead us in times of temptation and even seek to place our feet exactly where His have been when the danger of falling is very real.

All of those things are the opposite of quenching the Spirit. They are things that are fanning the flame of His presence in our lives. When he prompts us in our thinking and tells us something He wants us to do we yield to Him and follow His lead. However, somewhere along the line, for whatever reason, we feel a little rebellious. We get

Day 30

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

Romans chapter 8 is one of the most magnificent chapters in all of Scripture. It follows on the heels of Paul’s cry that we can all identify at the end of Romans 7 – “Wretched man that I am who will free me from this body of death!” The answer is the Spirit!!! He and His Word are God’s provision for us to experience the true life of being a follower of Christ.

Look carefully at what is said in this one verse. Jesus was dead and buried for 3 days. His cold and destroyed body was wrapped in linen and was lying on a slab of stone in a dark tomb for 72 hours. There was no life in the body until the Father, through the Spirit, raised Jesus up from the dead. He has the power to bring life into death. He breathed new life into a body that had no life in it at all.

Then we read that this same Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God, will also give life to our mortal bodies. Since He can give life to a body that is physically dead so also He can give life to our bodies that are physically alive but were spiritually dead. We need to understand that wherever the Spirit is He brings the capacity to give life and a quality of life that we were meant to experience by our Father and the Lord Jesus.

When you get up in the morning I am betting there are things you do on a regular basis in order to have life. The first thing you do when you wake up every morning is you take a breath. If you are not breathing then you will not be getting up and your body will have no physical life. Then you are going to be getting up, cleaning yourself up and dressing yourself up. Then off you go to feed yourself so that you have the energy your body needs to do whatever it needs to do that day.

Regardless if you are living in a mansion or are renting a one-room apartment these are the basics we all do to maintain a physical life. Stop doing them for a prolonged period of time and life begins to fall apart.

There are many people that excel in taking care of their physical lives but are spiritually impoverished. They know what to do to have all they need physically and many of us have so much excess in that area. We consume too much food and grow fat. We fill up our lives with so much stuff and become exhausted trying to maintain it all. The longer we run on this treadmill of providing the physical life and looking for it to satisfy us the more tired we become and empty we feel. We can end up feeling empty and dead inside because we are trying to create life from stuff that cannot give us life.

Life comes from the Spirit. We saw that from the very beginning when over the dark and chaotic mess there was the Spirit brooding. He may be brooding over you at this

Day 31

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And **we all**, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, **are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory**, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

One thing I have learned at this point in my life (I am 58), I want less of me and more of Jesus. I want to be more like Jesus. I want to bear more of the fruit of the Spirit. I want to be used of the Spirit and have Him give me whatever gifts He wants me to have so that I can edify the body of Christ – the Church. John the Baptist said; “He must increase and I must decrease.” Amen to that!!!

So how does that happen? It does not result from wearing a WWJD bracelet. Now that is a good question to ask ourselves but seeking to know what Jesus would do and then trying to accomplish that on our own will only lead to either failure from our own efforts or spiritual pride over what we are able to do.

However, God already has a plan for this to happen. It is a plan He began to implement into your life the day you received Christ even though His plan for you predates the creation (Eph 1:4). It is a plan that He will completely finish (Phil. 1:6). It is a plan that He takes the lead in as we yield ourselves to Him and then do what He tells us to do in the strength He provides.

God's plan is our transformation. That word is used two times in the New Testament to refer to us and twice to refer to Jesus. It is the process whereby what is true on the inside of us comes through to the outside of us. When Jesus was transfigured on The Mount of Transfiguration he shone like the sun. The inward brightness and purity of his deity shone through so the disciples could see who he really was.

This word today is metamorphosis. We use it to describe that happens to a caterpillar in the cocoon. Transformation is God changing us from the inside out to make us more like Jesus. The end result is to conform us to the image of His Son. Jesus, when he was here on the earth, was God in the flesh. He became the visible and physical God in the flesh and blood body of a man. He was completely a man and He was also completely God.

So now it is the Spirit's work to be transforming us into the image of Jesus. He is not making us gods. He is making us like Jesus – who was God in the flesh. We remain flesh and blood human beings but are becoming men and women who think, speak and act like Jesus. This is not being accomplished by our own efforts but by the power of the Spirit literally changing us from the inside out. The verb is in the passive voice, which means it is an action of God upon and in us – not something we do ourselves. The author of the action is God, however it does not happen by our being passive – it does not happen automatically.

This verse points out that there is something that needs to be taking place for this transformation to be happening. It says that we, with unveiled faces, are contemplating or beholding the Lord’s glory. As we are doing that, focusing on, beholding, contemplating Jesus - the Spirit is transforming us into His image.

Perhaps there is a lack of transformation in your life because there is no contemplating the Lord’s glory. Are you spending time with Jesus? Are you listening to Jesus? I hear from a lot of men who say they are not able to connect with Jesus. I cannot sense His presence and love. I find that amazing. These men, and I would believe almost all men, have the ability to fantasize. They have become addicted to sex and for many they are experts and creating fantasies in their minds about sexual things. Those thoughts produce within them emotional and sensual feelings and they have an anatomical reaction. All this over something that is not real but a fantasy.

Yet, they say they are not able to feel Jesus. They can feel what is not real but is a fantasy, however, cannot feel what is real – the love of Jesus. What is wrong with this picture? They have practiced for years – even decades beholding and contemplating sex but have probably not ever really contemplated Jesus, or dare I say fantasize about Him (sought to earnestly focus on Him in their minds). What I am really saying is using this gift of imagination or creativity to see themselves with Jesus as He really is – in his resurrected body!

We might have become very disciplined and read our bibles everyday. However, have you ever just stopped reading and used your mind to imagine the love of Jesus? Imagined Him hanging on the cross and dying for you. Imagined Him resurrected and appearing to you like he did the disciples. Imagined Him sitting with you, talking with you and even holding you? Perhaps you are not being transformed because you are not beholding and contemplating the glory of Jesus and his personal love for you and so that is why you are not feeling Him.

I encourage you to begin using your imagination, based upon what you know to be true about Him from the Bible, and begin to spend time with Jesus in your life. You will be surprised at the things He will teach you and begin to feel more deeply his love for you.

I hope that this devotional has helped you develop a deeper and more intimate walk with the Holy Spirit. My prayer is that He has become your Comforter and your Counselor. As you make it your daily habit to ask for His filling and walk in Him you will begin to bear His fruit and experience His gifts and power. His purpose in your life is to transform you into the image of Jesus. He will never leave you or forsake you.

So can you imagine what your life will be like when you are unconditionally surrendered to Him on a moment-by-moment basis? I believe that He will transform you and you will experience a new vibrant relationship with the Spirit, with the Lord Jesus and with your heavenly Father.

If you have further questions you can reach me by email ...

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