AbundantLifeChurch
SIMI VALLEY

Sunday, November 1, 2026 - FULL BARS – WALKING CONNECTED TO THE SPIRIT – Pastor John Henry Raskin

Big idea: You were saved not only from judgment, but for fellowship with God and a Spirit-led life. Unacknowledged sin can hinder that fellowship; honest repentance restores the joy of walking with Him.

Made for purpose. Equipped by the Spirit.

You are God's workmanship, created in Christ for good works He prepared beforehand (**Ephesians 2:10**). You are not asked to discern or accomplish His will alone: the Holy Spirit dwells in you, guides you, and helps you take the next obedient step (**John 14:16–17**). Like a branch in the vine, remain in Christ and depend on His life to bear fruit (**John 15:4**).

Union and communion: know the difference

Union: Your secure belonging to God in Christ. You are sealed by the Spirit and held in the Father's and Son's hands (**Ephesians 4:30; John 10:28–29**).
Communion: Your experienced fellowship with Him—nearness, peace, joy, and fruitful obedience. Sin can hinder communion without undoing union.

The phone-signal picture is an illustration, not doctrine. The Holy Spirit is a Person who loves you—not a signal—and God is not an indifferent network.

Recognize the signs of hindered fellowship with God

Slow pages: Scripture feels distant and prayer feels difficult. Ask whether you are cherishing something you will not surrender (**Psalm 66:18**).

Buffering: You know the next step—an apology, a phone call, an uncomfortable act of obedience—but keep delaying. "Do not quench the Spirit" (**1 Thessalonians 5:19**).

Pop-ups: Old temptations and habits regain your attention. Do not leave room for them; replace sinful patterns with godly practices that nurture fellowship.

Important: Not every difficult day signals sin. Grief, illness, exhaustion, and suffering can make life feel slow. Ask the Spirit honestly; if He reveals nothing you are holding onto, rest rather than accuse yourself.

Return to the Source—do it now

Come as a child → Ask the Spirit to search you → Name the sin → Turn from it → Make it right → Receive your freedom.

Keep short accounts with God. Repentance is an honest turning of the heart, not a performance or a longer religious checklist. Return to the One who is gracious and merciful (**Joel 2:12–13**). Draw near to Him (**James 4:8**) and welcome the refreshing of His presence (**Acts 3:19**).

Take one step today

Ask: "Is there something I am holding on to?"
Respond: What obedient step is before you—a call, forgiveness, a meal for a neighbor, or a needed word? Walk in the Spirit's strength, not your own.

Prayer: Father, search my heart. Help me release what hinders fellowship, receive Your mercy, and walk in the good works You have prepared. Restore the joy of Your presence. Amen.

FULL BARS – WALKING CONNECTED TO THE SPIRIT

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Last week we asked and answered the question, “HOW do I repent?”

We also touched on the why, the answer to that being “because God wants fellowship with you to be experienced without the separation and suffering that unconfessed sin creates.

We learned to come to the Father as children, to ask the Spirit to search and lead us, and to rise from our alone time with God with a clear conscience.

But today I want to ask a question we only lightly touched on last week.

Why would a child of God, already forgiven and already adopted, be in any hurry to come back when something has gone wrong if they are forgiven anyway?

We did discover that it is our fellowship with God that is at stake.

But let’s be honest… Not every believer knows the feeling of joy that comes with that fellowship. They are just living their lives pretty much the way they did before they believed.

If that is you, perhaps what is missing is having real joy to look forward to… Fellowship with God equals joy.

Not that you should seek fellowship with God for that reason only but… Let’s face it, something is missing in your life in Christ if you don’t have it.

My job as your Pastor and a teacher is to point out that missing piece and to illuminate the scriptures so that you will want that fellowship and know how to restore it when it is missing.

So, let's talk about that…

You were made for something. You were not saved only to be kept out of judgment although that is a wonderful gift of God.

You were saved to follow Jesus, to walk in the Spirit, to live a life that God Himself planned for you before you drew your first breath and to do it with Him.

This is a cell phone. Look familiar?

Every one of us knows what it is to go looking for a signal.

Some of you have a router at home that supplies all the bars you could ask for.

Some of you know exactly which table at the library, or which corner of which parking lot or fast food restaurant, gives you a connection when you need one.

In any case, we all know the feeling of a lost or weak connection.

The page just sits there. The little wheel turns and turns.

The video freezes at the worst moment, and then an advertisement pops up and covers the very thing you most wanted to see.

Nothing is wrong with the phone. The phone is fine. The trouble is the connection.

You are not a cell phone, but in some ways, you may be LIKE a cell phone.

So here is an analogy that I want to offer, and I offer it humbly, as an illustration and not as a doctrine.

A believer is a person connected by the Spirit to the mind of Christ.

When sin goes unacknowledged, that person is not thrown out of the network. But the signal weakens.

Pages load slowly. The stream stalls. The pop-ups begin. And the answer is never a new device. The answer is to come back into range.

Let's turn to Ephesians chapter 2.

Let me read a verse many of you know by heart, and I want you to hear it again.

Ephesians 2:10 - For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

The Greek word that Paul uses for "workmanship" is "poiēma".

The word means "that which is created," and it is where we get our word poem.

You are God's composition, a beautiful poem He is creating, His handiwork, made on purpose and with care. The poem was also not fully written the day you were born. You are a masterpiece in progress.

Notice also that the good works were "prepared beforehand that you should walk in them."

God did not make you and then wonder what to do with you.

Your path was laid out for you before you were born. Your part is to walk in it.

Because you were given free will, although the good works are pre-arranged, the verb “should walk’ which in Greek is “peripatesomen”, means we can still choose not to.

Now let’s stop and ask an obvious question…

What happens when a believer forgoes a good work that was prepared for them and how does that fit into God's overall plan?

The answer is debated in the theological community, but I very strongly believe this…

When an individual believer misses a designed assignment God will then reroute it to someone else to fulfill his grand design.

That concept bridges human free will and divine sovereignty without contradiction.

So what that means is… if you miss a good work that's prepared beforehand, you will not experience the joy that comes from walking in that obedience but someone else will.

Now, you may be asking another question, and that is “if a good work is prepared beforehand, how can I know it and how do I walk in it?”

You may be thinking, “I’m not omniscient… I don’t have the wisdom, the strength, or the insight to discern, let alone accomplish God’s will”.

And the answer that the New Testament gives us in keeping with our internet analogy is that you were never made or asked to do it on your own internal signal. You were given a connection.

Jesus promised that connection on the night before He went to the cross.

John 14:16-17- 16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

Paul says that when you believed, you "were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13).

Sealed, in this case means marked as His, and with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of everything still to come.

Furthermore, Paul tells us we have the Mind of Christ.

Last week we saw that the mind of Christ is how the Spirit shines light into our darkness.

This morning I want you to see that the mind of Christ is also how we receive direction to know the good works prepared beforehand.

The same Spirit who shows you your sin shows you the next step.

The same Spirit that corrects you also guides you.

Isaiah 26:3 - You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.

This should be the life goal of every believer. A mind fixed on Him, drawing from Him, and at peace.

Jesus had His own picture for this.

John 15:4 - Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

A branch does not struggle to produce grapes. It remains connected, and the life of the vine produces the fruit.

To abide means to inhabit, to remain, to make yourself a home in. It also means to stay fixed in and persistent over time and ultimately to be dependent on.

Do you see what this means?

Believers need connection. We need signal. Just like our phones.

The signal is a gift. You didn't install it. You couldn't have earned it.

And the One who is the source never stops working and He never moves.

Now, if the signal is a gift and the Source never moves, why do so many believers live as though they are running on one bar?

Isaiah gives us the diagnosis, and it begins by acquitting God.

Isaiah 59:1–2 - Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.

Read that again. The hand that parted the Red Sea is not shortened. He is not hard of hearing. It is not that He is unable to hear your prayers.

The problem is never on His end.

Isaiah is writing to a covenant people, God's own, and he says that sin we hold on to makes a distance in the relationship.

Not a divorce. A distance. And when there is distance, you can feel it. Let me name four ways it shows up in the internet analogy we have begun....

Problem # 1: The pages load slowly.

The Bible sits in your lap, but the words will not allow you to engage with their personal meaning. Prayer, which once came easily, now takes effort and you feel unheard.

Why is this happening? Usually, this is a symptom of too much worldly affection and that there is something we would rather be doing. Idolatry was Israel's sin. Maybe its yours.

Psalm 66:18 says, - If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.

We need to be careful with that verse. The psalmist is not describing the sin we stumble into and then grieve over and repent of.

The word regard means to look upon with favor, to hold onto, to keep. It is the sin we have quietly decided to keep because it feeds something deep inside of us.

The thing we have purposed to keep doing on our own without God's interference. That is what slows the page.

Problem # 2 - The stream buffers.

You asked the Lord to search you and He answered.

You know the next step. You have known it for days.

A phone call, an apology, an act of uncomfortable obedience.

And your life stalls at sixty percent, going nowhere.

Paul's command to the church in Thessalonica is short and to the point:

1Thessalonians 5:19 - **Do not quench the Spirit.**

Quench is a word used for stopping something before it can be established. In a negative context, think of quenching a rebellion.

When you quench the Spirit, it means you are resisting what you know He is telling you to do.

The connection glitches.

You snap at someone you love and do not know where it came from. You are fine, and then suddenly, you are not.

Inconsistency, irritability, barking out a curse you did not mean to say.

These are all things that cause us regret.

When unaddressed, our connection with God diminishes and we lose connection with other people as well.

Problem #3 – The Pop-Ups.

Ah yes… the pop-ups…

Those nasty little teasers that quickly lead you down a dangerous path. Pop-ups happen when you are not seeking the things of God.

Old habits arise… Anxiety, anger, a seductive screen that keeps you up scrolling at midnight, a thought that says, "Why bother praying? It doesn't work anyway…

Paul warns us not to "give place to the devil".

The word he uses for place is topos, a room to live in, a patch of ground on which to linger.

An unaddressed sin is a place, an empty house, a patch of ground, and the enemy loves to set up camp there.

Think of an addiction as an unclean spirit.

This is what Jesus says about that…

Luke 11:24-26 - 24 "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' 25 And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. 26 Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

The key to this verse is that while the house from which the addiction has been cleansed is "swept and put in order", it remains vacant.

We talked last week about repentance.

Many of us, once we were saved, have repented of particular addictions that plagued us when we were unbelievers.

As believers, those things must be replaced with something else. Something godly… something that restores connection.

Jesus was able to say, "the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me" (John 14:30).

There was no place, no patch of ground in Him where the devil could find a home.

However, in us, there often is, and that is where the pop-ups get in.

So, what do we do when we notice these signs of a weak or lost signal?

Most of us, when the signal is weak, try to fix it.

We go to our checklist… read more chapters and say longer prayers, all the while leaning on our own understanding.

It is the spiritual version of restarting the app over and over when the problem isn't the app, it's the signal.

Don't treat the symptoms. Go to the source.

Last week gave us the road to reestablishing connection : come as a child, ask the Spirit to search you, name the sin He reveals, turn from it, make it right, and receive your freedom.

Today I only want to add three words to it.

Do it Now.

Joel 2:12–13 - Now, therefore,' says the LORD, 'Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.' So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness."

The Lord says "Do it now". Don't wait for the season of disconnection to run its course. It won't. Without action by you it can't.

Keep short accounts with God. The sooner you respond to what He is telling you, the less ground the enemy gets and the less time the stream spends buffering.

For the people of Israel, tearing your clothes was a display.

Don't be like them and make a big show of it for people to see or even to make yourself feel better…

Repentance is not a religious ritual. It is a deliberate turning of your face away from the sin and towards God.

You don't need a perfect prayer. You need an honest one, and you can pray it in your car, in the checkout line, or at the shelter before the lights go out.

God is asking for your heart. And He tells you what you will find when you get there: that He is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and great in kindness.

James writes, **James 4:8 - Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.**

The moment you turn towards Him you will find that He is already near.

If you are not hearing from the Spirit, it is likely because you just don't want Him to get in the way of what YOU want to do.

That is sin.

Hear Peter, preaching in Acts 3.

Acts 3:19 - Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

Repentance is not where joy goes to die. It is where the breath comes back and joy again LIVES.

The psalmist prayed, "Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You?" (Psalm 85:6).

That is the prayer of someone who knows what it is to have the signal back.

And when the signal returns, notice what happens.

The pages load. The Bible becomes personal again.

Prayer stops being an effort and becomes a conversation.

The pop-ups lose their grip.

And the works God prepared beforehand come back into focus: the person you are to call this week, the hard thing you are to forgive, the neighbor who needs a meal, the word you are to speak.

Those were there all along. You were simply too far out of range to see them clearly.

Now, a word for those of you who have a true heart for God about losing connection momentarily.

Not every slow day is sin.

Sometimes the storm takes out the whole neighborhood.

Grief, illness, exhaustion, and a hard season in a fallen world can slow the connection for any of us, and Job's friends were wrong to treat his suffering as proof of hidden sin.

I recognize that and so does scripture and so I am not asking you to dig through your past this morning looking for glitches.

However, I am asking you to ask the Spirit one simple question: Is there something I am holding on to?

If the answer is no, then rest in that.

If the answer is yes, then that is good news, because it means there is something you can do about it.

Someone here might be thinking, "John, are you telling me I can drop off the network? That I can lose it?"

No. And I want this to be clear. Obviously, the context of our internet analogy only goes so far.

This is where this analogy has to be held loosely, because Wi-Fi is either on or off, and your standing with God is not.

Elsewhere in his letter to the Ephesians Paul writes:

Ephesians 4:30 - And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

The word Paul uses for "grieve" is "lypeo".

It means to cause pain or sorrow. You cannot grieve the Universe, or a force or an energy. You can only grieve a person who loves you.

The Spirit is not an inanimate signal tower.

He is a Person who lives in you and cares what happens to you. He is the Person who created you and has a plan for your life.

Hear the Lord Jesus.

John 10:28–29 - And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.

There are two hands at work here, the Son's and the Father's and you are held by both.

Paul adds that nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38–39).

Please remember that you are sealed.

In Ephesians 4:30, the very Spirit we may grieve is the same Spirit by whom we were sealed "for the day of redemption."

Grieving Him does not break the seal, but it will seriously hinder the fellowship, the connection and the wonderful life He planned for His child may not come to fruition.

So here is the distinction I want you to carry out of this room this morning.

Remember these two words. Union and communion.

Union is where you live with God in Christ.

Communion is how it feels to live there.

Union was settled the day you truly believed in Jesus as Lord. Union with God is your home in Him.

Communion, however… the nearness, the peace, the usefulness, is the part that can be hindered.

Think of a child who has disobeyed his father. He is still that father's child. Nothing changes his name.

But the house is too quiet at dinner.

He does not look up. He does not want to be known.

And the father, if he is a good father, is not looking for a reason to put him out.

He is waiting for the boy to look up.

That is where the analogy is flawed, and I want to say so clearly.

An internet router is indifferent. It doesn't actually care whether you are connected or not.

The Holy Spirit is not an electrical signal, and God is not a network.

Jesus tells us that God pursues you desperately and recklessly like the Father of the Prodigal son.

He will restore connection the moment you turn from your own agenda and want to know His.

You do not need to talk your way back into the family.

You simply need to answer the call from a Father who has not stopped saying your name since before you were born.

So here is where we land today.

You were made on purpose, His workmanship, for good works which God prepared beforehand.

You were given a connection that you did not earn and cannot lose: The Holy Spirit within you, and the mind of Christ available to you.

But we need to remember that when sin goes unacknowledged or worse, embraced, you might not be thrown off the network, but your signal may be lost.

The pages slow, the stream stalls, the pop-ups come, and the Spirit who loves you is grieved.

Please remember that the Father, who never moved, is always calling, “Return to me.”

Come back into range. Come quickly, come simply, and come gladly to where the joy is.

And then walk out the good works, not on your own initiative and not in your own strength, but in the light and the power of the One who prepared the way because He loves you.

Let’s pray