



Almont Vineyard Church

Week 5 Targeted Series: "Living Empowered by the Holy Spirit"

October 10, 2026

Opening Monologue

Welcome to the AVC app. This is the sermon portion of the application, where you will find spiritual applications, commentary, Scripture, and devotional questions at the bottom so you can dig deeper into God's Word and the sermon of the week. Make sure you check out the other app features as well. There is a lot here to help you grow. Enjoy as you grow in Jesus Christ.

This week we conclude our current series, Targeted. The sermon is titled: "Living Empowered by the Holy Spirit."

Over the last five weeks we have broken a lot of this down. If you missed any of those sermons, use this YouTube link to catch up, or to listen again to one you want to hear:

<https://www.youtube.com/@almontvineyardchurch>

The Bible is clear. Satan is the prince of the power of the air, and he leads the whole world astray. He schemes, sifts, accuses, and looks for an open door in your life so he can take you out. The great news of the gospel is this: "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8b). Yes, we are targeted. But Jesus did not tell us to hide in a cave or bury ourselves in a bunker. So, the real question is this: if we are targeted, how do we live out the Christian life and remain protected? This week we dig into that by talking about a life empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is part of the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He was not created in the New Testament. He has always been. (Genesis 1:2)

In my opinion, the Holy Spirit is the most unused power given to Christians and to the Church, particularly in America. Over the last several years the Holy Spirit has been openly mocked by glorified TikTokers and YouTubers. Some have even said that moves of the Holy Spirit are just emotionalism. How about this: many Christians are motionless.-sorry! I honestly do not know what Bible those Christians are reading.

This Sunday we turn to Jesus and to what He said about the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of promise He sent for us to receive and to walk in. After the Holy Spirit was poured out in Acts 2, Christians lived empowered by the Spirit, and the rest of the New Testament displays that reality.

A word I believe the Lord has for the global Church is this: God is a supernatural God, but many Christians have become skeptics. We are going to get into many powerful Scriptures this week, so I want to encourage you to come and hear God's Word, so your life can be empowered. That is how we stay protected.

"But God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words" (1 Corinthians 2:10-13).

Come and join us Sunday. We are learning and growing together.

In Christ,

Rev. Brad Standfest

To Listen to this week's Sermon: "Week 5 Targeted Series/ Don't Be Sifted" Go to the Sermon tab here in our APP or use the links to our website or YouTube Channel where you can also listen to our Sermons:

Web: <https://www.almontvineyardchurch.org/media>

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Key Sermon Text

1 John 3:8

Genesis 1:2

John 14:15-18

John 14:25-27

John 16:5-8

John 16:12-15

1 Corinthians 2:6-13

Romans 8:13-14

Spiritual Reflection

The Holy Spirit's Power According to Jesus

Have you ever seen these words before in the Gospel of Jesus Christ? If you have been around Christianity and have read your Bible, you certainly have come across them. But did you read them clearly, or did you skim through them? Did the words of Jesus sink in?

You can find Jesus's complete words in John 14–16. Here is the short excerpt of exact quotes from Jesus.

"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. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." (John 14:15–18)

"All this I have spoken while still with you. 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. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (John 14:25–27)

"Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment." (John 16:5–8)

"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 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. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.” (John 16:12–15)

If you read these words carefully and closely, you will clearly see that Jesus promised us the gift of the Holy Spirit. He first calls the Holy Spirit the Counselor. Notice that, in a good translation, Counselor is written with a capital C. Jesus is not speaking of a mere human adviser. He is speaking of God himself, the Holy Spirit.

You will also notice Jesus’s words about peace: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27). The world gives fear and chaos. The Lord gives his own peace, and then he tells us not to let our hearts be troubled and not to be afraid. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is going to help us. Jesus goes into great detail explaining the many roles the Holy Spirit takes.

Let us look at these roles.

Jesus said the Holy Spirit is a Counselor. So, what does a counselor do? A counselor listens. He hears us, and then he gives counsel. That is exactly the point. The Holy Spirit is going to listen to you, speak to you, and give you counsel for your life. Think about that. The Holy Spirit is a person of the Godhead — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Are you talking to the Counselor? Are you listening to the Holy Spirit’s counsel?

Now look at another role. Jesus said the Holy Spirit will be with you, and the Holy Spirit will live in you. In other words, the Holy Spirit’s desire is to walk with you and talk with you every day of your life. That is the power of our Lord.

Jesus says the Holy Spirit will teach you and remind you of everything he has said. Part of the Holy Spirit’s work is to convict the world of guilt in regard to sin, and to guide us and speak truth to us. What a loving God, so interested in being intertwined with our lives. It is overwhelming when you stop and think about his great love for us.

If that is not supernatural enough, our Lord Jesus takes it even further:

“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. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.” (John 16:13–14)

The Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth. Isn’t that incredible? Sometimes in this life we are perplexed by many things that come flying at us. They can confuse us or try to frustrate us. Honestly, the father of lies, Satan, tries to do this all the time. But Jesus is saying the Holy Spirit is going to give you the truth. I cannot help but think of Jesus’s own words: “I am the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6).

From the middle of verse 13 on into verse 14, Jesus tells us that the Spirit will reveal what is yet to come, and will take what belongs to Jesus and make it known to us. That is the mysteries of God made known by the Holy Spirit. If you are perplexed by that, reread verse 14. Jesus said the Spirit will take what is mine — the revelations that belong to the Lord Jesus — and make it known to you. Why would the Lord do something like that? To protect our lives. To warn us not to go there. Not to do this or that. Not to make that decision. To correct what we do not yet know. We read about this kind of guidance in the book of Acts and in the epistles.

Take a look at how the Holy Spirit moved in the apostle Paul’s life. This is exactly what Jesus was describing in John 14–16. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of power and of promise, poured out for all believers in Acts 2. It is a

shame if Christians do not take hold of what the Lord has given and use it in their lives. If we do not, our lives will be hindered greatly.

The Holy Spirit's work in the apostle Paul's life serves as an example of Jesus's words, and of how he wants to move in our lives.

The primary incident is in Acts 16:6–7. Paul and his companions were kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, “but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to” (Acts 16:7). This was a significant redirection of his missionary strategy. The closed doors were not a failure of the mission. They were the Counselor guiding them into the truth of where they were to go. The next night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia, and they concluded that God had called them to preach the gospel there (Acts 16:9–10).

Paul encountered more than one redirection. Later he told the Ephesian elders, “And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me” (Acts 20:22–23). When he reached Tyre, the disciples, through the Spirit, urged him not to go on to Jerusalem (Acts 21:4). That is not a contradiction of the Spirit's earlier compulsion. The Spirit had already revealed the suffering that awaited Paul. The believers at Tyre heard that warning and concluded he should not go. Paul understood the warning as preparation, not as a prohibition that canceled the call. He was ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 21:13). The Lord himself later stood near Paul and said, “Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome” (Acts 23:11).

Paul consistently reserved God's right to alter his plans — through visions of Christ and of angels, through prophecy, and through the Spirit's compulsion. That flexibility marked his whole missionary work. He kept a clear strategy, and he remained adaptable, always ready to adjust to the Spirit and to circumstances.

The pattern in Acts is that the Holy Spirit directs the church's activity, dispersing the apostles with the gospel and working behind the scenes in every development. Paul's responsiveness — whether to a prohibition or to a compulsion — shows how early Christian leaders submitted their plans to divine guidance. That is the same Spirit Jesus promised in the upper room: the Counselor who lives in us, teaches us, reminds us, convicts, guides into all truth, speaks only what he hears, tells what is yet to come, and glorifies Jesus by making known what belongs to him.

So the question Jesus leaves with us is not whether the Holy Spirit has been given. He has. The question is whether we are talking to the Counselor, and whether we are listening when he speaks.

Living by the Spirit: A Deep Theological Reflection

The New Testament presents Spirit-empowered living not as an optional spiritual luxury but as the fundamental reality of Christian existence. The indwelling of God's Spirit distinguishes those who belong to Christ (Rom 8:9–11), establishing the foundation upon which all authentic Christian practice rests.

The Spirit as Transformative Power

Walking by the Spirit provides liberation from enslaving desires of the flesh (Gal 5:16–25). This isn't merely behavioral modification—it represents a reorientation of the entire person. Those who set their minds on spiritual realities rather than fleshly ones discover that such orientation produces life and peace (Rom 8:4–6).

The apostles modeled this reality: they received power through the Holy Spirit to become witnesses across the earth (Acts 1:8), demonstrating that Spirit-empowered living produces missional fruitfulness.

By the Spirit's power, believers put to death destructive patterns and thereby discover they are truly God's children (Rom 8:13–14)—a status inseparable from Spirit-dependence. The Spirit's fruit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control—emerges organically from this alignment (Gal 5:16–25).

Prayer as Spirit-Enabled Communion

Prayer represents the most intimate expression of Spirit-dependent living. The Spirit intercedes for believers in their weakness, praying with inarticulate groanings that align with God's will in ways our conscious minds cannot articulate (Rom 8:26–27). This creates a paradox: the activities of divine Spirit and believer become so intertwined that the Spirit doesn't merely inspire action but embraces human activity and makes it its own.

Believers are called to pray at all times in the Spirit (Eph 6:18), while praying with both spirit and mind together represents the fuller expression (1 Cor 14:15). Praying in the Spirit means surrendering to another who acts within us—letting go of our perceptions of need and entering into divine desire and will.

Spirit-Filled Worship and Understanding

True worship occurs when believers worship the Father in spirit and truth, since God himself is spirit (John 4:23–24). Believers receive the Spirit of God precisely so they might understand divine gifts and communicate spiritual truths through Spirit-taught words (1 Cor 2:10–14). This reveals that Spirit-empowered living encompasses intellectual and spiritual dimensions together.

The Witnesses

The apostles embodied this theology. Believers are commanded to be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18)—an ongoing imperative suggesting continuous renewal rather than a single event. The warning not to quench the Spirit (1 Thess 5:19) acknowledges that resistance to divine leading remains possible even for believers.

Integration of Theology and Life

Contemporary theology desperately needs reintegration of doctrine and lived experience, focusing on the actual reality of Christian life. Taking experience seriously means allowing our encounter with the Spirit to inform our theological vision while asking what the Spirit is doing and teaching in daily life.

Through the Spirit and by faith, believers eagerly await the hope of righteousness (Gal 5:5), while the God of hope fills believers with joy and peace through the power of the Holy Spirit, producing abundant hope (Rom 15:13). Jesus promised the Spirit of truth as a permanent Helper dwelling within believers (John 14:16–17), establishing the basis for all subsequent Spirit-empowered existence in the church.

Living by the Spirit means operating under divine empowerment rather than relying on your own willpower. The Spirit provides the power needed to follow God when his will conflicts with natural desire. The verbs are continuous: keep on living, keep on walking. This is not a one-time achievement. It is moment-by-moment decisions, and moment-by-moment contact with his guidance and correction. Practically, the Spirit illuminates the mind to understand Scripture, empowers the believer to become like Christ, convicts of sin, and creates the desire to do what God wants. The outcome is not small. Living by the Spirit leads to life; living according to the flesh leads to death (Romans 8:13–14).

The 1984 NIV renders Galatians 5:16 “live by the Spirit.” The Greek is peripateite, “walk,” which is why many translations say “walk by the Spirit.” Galatians 5:25 uses a different verb, stoichomen, “keep in step.” Both belong here. Living and walking are the same summons. Keeping in step is the daily obedience that matches the life the Spirit has already given. Ephesians 5:18 is present tense: keep on being filled.

Biblical passages on Spirit-empowered living

Walk, live, keep in step, be filled

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

Galatians 5:17–18 “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 do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.”

Galatians 5:22–23 “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.”

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

Galatians 6:8 “The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”

Galatians 5:5 “But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.”

Romans 7:6 “But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.”

Romans 8:4–6 “in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.”

Romans 8:9 “You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.”

Romans 8:11 “And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.”

Romans 8:13–14 “For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”

Ephesians 5:18 “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.”

The Spirit given, received, and indwelling

Acts 1:8 “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 2:4 “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”

Acts 2:38–39 “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

Romans 5:5 “And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”

1 Corinthians 3:16 “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?”

1 Corinthians 6:19 “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?”

2 Corinthians 1:21–22 “Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.”

2 Corinthians 5:5 “Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.”

Galatians 3:14 “He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.”

Galatians 4:6 “Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’”

Ephesians 1:13–14 “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.”

Ephesians 2:18 “For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.”

Ephesians 2:22 “And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”

2 Timothy 1:14 “Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.”

Titus 3:5–6 “he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior.”

1 John 3:24 “Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.”

1 John 4:13 “We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.”

Prayer in the Spirit, and the Spirit who prays

Romans 8:26–27 “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.”

Ephesians 6:18 “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”

Jude 20 “But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.”

1 Corinthians 14:15 “So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind.”

The Spirit and the Word, the mind, and discernment

1 Corinthians 2:10–16 “but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man’s judgment: ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?’ But we have the mind of Christ.”

Ephesians 1:17 “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.”

Ephesians 3:16 “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being.”

Colossians 1:9 “For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.”

1 John 2:27 “As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.”

1 John 4:1–2 “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.”

John 4:23–24 “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”

Fruit, transformation, and power

Romans 15:13 “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Romans 15:16 “to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”

2 Corinthians 3:17–18 “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

1 Thessalonians 1:5 “because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.”

2 Thessalonians 2:13 “But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.”

1 Peter 1:2 “who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood.”

2 Peter 1:21 “For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

Do not resist the life he gives

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

1 Thessalonians 5:19 “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire.”

Acts 5:3 “Then Peter said, ‘Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit?’”

Acts 7:51 “You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!”

Hebrews 10:29 “How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?”

Romans 8:23 “Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”

Sources: 1-8, Scripture. All quotations are from the Holy Bible, New International Version, 1984. John 14:6, 15–18, 25–27; John 16:5–8, 12–15; Acts 2; Acts 16:6–10; Acts 20:22–23; Acts 21:4, 13; Acts 23:11.

Commentary

The Spirit and the Christian Life (A Deep Reflection)

The restoration of humankind to a new way of life is the work of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Peter puts it thus: “Chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood” (1 Pet. 1:2). The early Christians thought of themselves as the people of God and for that reason spoke of themselves as chosen, selected, or elected by God, as Israel was chosen in the Old Testament. And just as obedience lay at the heart of the Old Testament covenant (Ex. 19:5), so the new people of God have been chosen and destined for “obedience to Jesus Christ.” But all of this is made possible by the work of the Holy Spirit. “The choice and purpose of God takes effect through the activity of the Spirit

who deals with men in sanctification to set them apart and make them fit for this heavenly calling.” When the gospel is heard the Spirit applies God’s saving work to the heart of the obedient hearer, convinces him of the trustworthiness of Christ’s work on the cross, and makes him obedient to the gospel. Whereas Peter seems to have the initial response of obedience to the gospel in mind, the implication is that this act of obedience will lead to obedience to Christ in daily life.

This work of the Spirit in the human heart, enabling persons to respond to the gospel in which God’s election grace is proclaimed, is based on the work of Jesus Christ—“the sprinkling with his blood.” Such terminology finds its background in the covenant-making ceremony at Sinai (Ex. 24:3–8) when the altar and the people were sprinkled with blood after Israel promised to obey the words of the covenant. God’s saving purposes were carried out by the death of Jesus, by his blood, and the Holy Spirit makes that which happened at the cross, nearly two thousand years ago, a reality in our lives by setting us apart from evil and enabling us to live in obedience to Jesus.

One cannot separate the beginning of the new life in Christ with its continuation. “As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so live in him (Col. 2:6). While the Spirit, like the wind, is not visible, the coming of the Spirit into a person’s life will be visible from its effects on him or her. Where there are no sound effects, one concludes that there is no wind. So, too, when a person does not bow visibly in some way before the wind of the Spirit, one must conclude there is no Spirit. To the Galatians Paul writes: “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25). What does it mean to walk in the Spirit?

A. Walking in the Spirit

“Walking” is one of the most common metaphors in the New Testament to describe the life of the Christian. It is a Hebraic concept. Of the great saints of the Old Testament, such as Enoch, it was said that they walked with God. A person’s walk comes to stand for his outlook on life, his spiritual and ethical orientation, his behavior. To be a Christian means not only to believe certain things, but also to live a certain way. In fact early Christians were called the people of “the Way” (Acts 19:9, 23). In the Old Testament “God’s ways” is an equivalent of “God’s commandments.” When Paul calls on his converts to remember his “ways in Christ” (1 Cor. 4:17), he is exhorting them to obey his teaching on how to “walk” as Christians.

Paul uses several different Greek words, all of which are translated into English as “walk.” There is the simple *peripateo*, to patter about (our “peripatetic” is derived from it). It is found more than 30 times in Paul alone, with the meaning of living in a certain way. “But I say, walk [*peripateo*] by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16). At the end of the passage that begins with this exhortation Paul changes words: “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk [*stoicheo*] by the Spirit” (v. 25). *Stoicheo* means to walk in a straight line, to walk in step; perhaps we could render it: “keep in step with the Spirit.” There are other words for walk, but these two are found in a key passage that deals with a believer’s walk in the Spirit and we want to restrict ourselves to Galatians 5:16–26.

This passage stands in a broader context in which the apostle warns his readers against legalism, on the one hand, and against license, on the other. These two dangers have attended the church’s existence all through the centuries, and Paul offers the life in the Spirit as the antidote to both of these errors. The Spirit delivers the believer from bondage, yet binds him to Christ in such a way that he is careful to do his bidding. In Galatians 5, Paul first exhorted Christians to walk in (or by) the Spirit.

1. The Apostolic Exhortation

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16). Grammatically the command could be rendered either as walk “in” the Spirit or “by” the Spirit. The meaning is not too different,

for quite clearly Paul has in mind the power of the Spirit by which the believer can overcome the dominion of the flesh.

To walk in the Spirit does not mean that the believer is engaged exclusively in so-called spiritual activities: praying, singing, reading the Bible, and going to church—although these may very well be part of walking in the Spirit. If this were the meaning, however, Christians could obviously not walk in the Spirit all the time. The apostle wants the entire life of the readers to be a walk in the Spirit, even in earthly or mundane activities, including family life, business ventures, daily work, eating and drinking, and so forth.

The imperative implies that the life in the Spirit does not happen mechanically or automatically. It speaks of human responsibility. Not that we can walk in the Spirit by our own strength, but we must yield ourselves in obedience so that the Spirit can enable us to live a God-pleasing life. Moreover, the imperative is in the present tense and could be rendered “keeping on walking in the Spirit,” all the time, day by day.

This walk in the Spirit should not be understood as a series of spiritual “highs” followed by spiritual “lows.” Emotionally we may have “highs” and “lows,” but the life of the Spirit is not determined by our nervous system; it is not a matter of “mood.” It is possible to walk in the Spirit in joy and in sorrow, on dark days and bright, in success and disappointment. To walk in the Spirit is to trust in God’s power which is given to us by his Spirit.

We have noticed earlier that to be in the Spirit is not different from being in Christ, although there may be different nuances in these two expressions. To walk in the Spirit is to live a Christlike life, for the Spirit, as Jesus promised, was to glorify him. This means that a life in the Spirit is a life lived in keeping with the teachings of Jesus. So often enthusiasts have felt “led” by the Spirit without regard for Jesus’ commandments; that always leads to chaos.

Paul does not address his command to walk in the Spirit to some spiritually superior group in the church, the spiritual athletes or the church’s spiritual leaders. Paul does not have a double standard of holiness for clergy and laity. In the early period of the church all members were called “saints,” not just the martyrs or those who outdid others in sacred duties. All those who come to life in the Spirit must and can walk in the Spirit. That does not mean, however, that there are no conflicts in such a life.

2. The Moral Conflict

“For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would.” The believer, who has the Spirit of God, still is in conflict with the flesh; that is, he is still in this age when the flesh exercises its power. At the same time, however, the believer tastes of the powers of the age to come by the indwelling Spirit. This ambiguous situation leads to conflict.

The conflict Paul has in mind here is not a struggle between physical weakness and mental strength, the human spirit. If we think of the conflict in these terms we can easily fall into the error of Gnosticism in which the body was looked upon as evil and only the spirit was good. Rather, Paul has a moral conflict in mind, in which the Spirit of God stands over against the power of the flesh. “Flesh” must not be understood simply as sensuality; it covers the whole scope of evil in our lives. Nor should “flesh” be equated with “body,” for by confusing the two, some have tried to attain to greater holiness by suppressing all bodily desires. Indeed, some have mutilated their bodies in the interests of greater holiness.

Nor should we think of the conflict between Spirit and flesh as a conflict of two persons, as if we were divided personalities. Then we could attribute our misdeeds to the flesh and our good deeds to the Spirit and assume no responsibility for either; but we are held responsible for all that we do. It has often been suggested that Paul has the rabbinic concept of the two impulses (the yetzer ha tob and yetzer ha ra') in mind. Some rabbis even localized these impulses, the good impulse in the right and the bad impulse in the left kidney, and prescribed all kinds of ways for keeping the evil impulse under control. This was, in fact, a somewhat idealistic view of humanity for it was thought that persons had it within their power to keep the evil impulse under control. But Paul seems to think of the power of evil, the flesh, as an occupation army that has invaded our lives, and without the help of the Spirit of God we are defeated. These two, says Paul, "lie over against each other," like two armies locked in deadly combat.

There is victory, to be sure, but there is no escape from the conflict. Those who teach that the flesh can be eradicated, perhaps by some second work of grace, have not grasped the power of evil nor understood the meaning of Scripture on this point. There is no once-for-all escape from the flesh, this gravitational pull in our lives. Indeed, some of the saintliest Christians have the most acute struggles with the power of evil in their lives. By the Spirit, however, it is possible for an impatient person to become long-suffering, a person with a fiery temper to become meek, a stingy person to become generous.

Paul's understanding of salvation implies that the gracious gifts of God impose obligations upon the believer. They summon the believer to moral action; but this moral endeavor is based on God's saving power which is made real to the believer by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit represents both the demand and supply—demand, in that it calls us to a holy life; supply, in that it makes available the power of Christ's resurrection. The Spirit gives the believer the assurance that Christ has broken the power of sin. This becomes for him the imperative to walk in the Spirit. As he yields his life to the Spirit, he discovers a potential that lies outside himself by which he is enabled to please God.

To indicate clearly what Paul means by the flesh, against which the Spirit has taken up warfare, Paul gives us a long list of works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19, 20). The list begins with sexual aberrations, then goes on to the sins of idolatry and black magic. The works of the flesh include also the sins of the mind and the human spirit: enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party strife, envy. Even God-given healthy appetites such as eating and drinking can become works of the flesh through overindulgence. Paul does not suggest that all these evil things are always present in the believer's life, but certainly the believer is capable of falling into any of these sins and many more, for the apostle makes it plain that he is giving only samples ("and the like," v. 21). Paul does not have to list all the possible "works" of the flesh, for the believer has the Spirit of God and the Spirit instructs him on what is of the flesh and what is of God. Over against this dark list of "works" of the flesh Paul sets the "fruit" of the Spirit, of which we shall have more to say later. He adds that where love, joy, peace, and other Christian graces grow the law has to keep silent: "Against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:23). There cannot be a restraining law against them when they are exactly the kind of behavior and attitudes God is looking for. The life in the Spirit begins with a "crucifixion" of the flesh; it continues day by day with the Spirit of Christ creating in us a rich harvest of Christian graces. Thus we live victoriously by the power of the Spirit.

B. Led by the Spirit

In the passage we have just discussed Paul speaks also of the "guidance" of the Spirit. "If you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law" (Gal. 5:18). This makes the "walk" in the Spirit much more personal; it emphasizes the voluntary subjection of the will of the believer to the Holy Spirit. Moreover, the distinction here is not between "flesh" and "Spirit," but between "Spirit" and "law." The Spirit is, of course, antithetical to

both “flesh” and “law” (when law is understood as legalism; for legalism is just another expression of the flesh). Legalism and a life under the direction of the Spirit are opposites. To be guided by the Spirit does not mean enslavement to legalism on the one hand, nor does it mean license, on the other. The Spirit, however, never leads the believer to act contrary to God’s holy law. In fact, the Spirit supplies him with the strength to fulfill God’s law, and that explains why Paul can say that the one led by the Spirit is not under law; the law is silenced by obedience.

The guidance of the Spirit must not be understood as some kind of compulsion which the believer can do nothing about. The passive voice of the verb “to lead” (agesthe) suggests that the believer yields to the leading of the Spirit. Perhaps one could compare this kind of leading to that of the gentle guidance of a shepherd who leads his flock, in contrast to a driver of cattle who cracks the whip over them and forces them ahead.

A question that naturally arises is: How does the Spirit guide the believer? Sometimes, no doubt, the Spirit nudges us on by inner monitions. The Spirit’s voice may come to us through outward circumstances—perhaps the closing of one door and the opening of another. At other times the Spirit may guide us through the words or the example of another believer. One might even submit a matter to the discernment of a group of Christians. Or some godly person may have a “word of wisdom” for us. Then, too, the Lord often guides us through the Scriptures. This approach is open to abuse when, for example, a verse is picked out at random and the will of the Lord discerned by it. Yet a passage of Scripture may well be God’s voice saying, “This is the way, walk in it.” One cannot very well conceive of the Spirit’s guidance apart from prayer, either. In any case, there is no one way in which the Spirit guides all the time. Moreover, we should not think of the Spirit’s guidance only when we have decisions to make with regard to our career, family matters, and the many other decisions we face in the course of our daily calling. We need to discern the Spirit’s guidance particularly in ethical decision making, in matters of right and wrong. That is the primary concern of our text. Similarly, in Ephesians 5, a “careful walk” is one in which the believer discerns what the will of the Lord is, and that kind of walk is closely tied to the fullness of the Spirit (vv. 15–18).

The believer is called upon to “learn what is pleasing to the Lord” (Eph. 5:10), or to “approve what is excellent” (Phil. 1:10). In a great number of cases he has a clear word of God to guide him. One might think of the Ten Commandments or the many ethical instructions we have in the New Testament, both in the teachings of Jesus and of his apostles. But there are numerous life situations in which no specific word of Scripture can be quoted when ethical decisions have to be made. This is where the Holy Spirit steps into the picture. The Spirit’s guidance will not be contrary to Scripture, but he will bring the broader principles of Scripture to bear on our particular problem. It is as Klaus Bockmühl writes: “Fletcher’s new morality abolished the law in favor of the situation. Biblical situation ethics is convinced that the Spirit will meet the righteous demands of the law (Rom. 8:4). Law and the Spirit fit together: they are the word of the same God.” David Watson, in a striking aphorism, says essentially the same thing: “All word and no Spirit, we dry up; all Spirit and no word, we blow up; both word and Spirit, we grow up.”

Another passage in which Paul speaks of the guidance of the Spirit is Romans 8:14. “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” One should not read this passage as if Paul were making sonship dependent on the degree to which a believer is under the guidance of the Spirit. What Paul means is that all of God’s sons experience the guidance of the Spirit. It is a word of assurance, that those who are led by God’s Spirit are members in the family of God.

Precisely what Paul means by “led” (ago in the passive) is not easily established. Perhaps the difference between “being led” and “walking” in the Spirit is not all that great. The New English Bible translates ago (lead)

in our text by “moved.” Since the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9, 10), perhaps the leading of the Spirit should again be related to Christlike behavior. C. H. Dodd suggests: “To have the Spirit does not mean, as it used to mean, that some mysterious stream of divine essence is passing into the human organism. It means being in the most intimate conceivable touch with a Person.” The leading of the Spirit seems to embrace both insight into God’s will and an urge to do it. Paul gave the churches ethical guidelines, but there still remained a great many situations in which the individual would have difficulty in applying them, and for this he needed the guidance of the Spirit.

That the Spirit plays a part in sensitizing the Christian’s conscience can be seen from Romans 9:1. Here Paul insists that his love for Israel is genuine and points to the witness of the Holy Spirit in his conscience. “My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit.” The apostle appeals to his conscience as a trustworthy witness to his love for Israel on the ground that his conscience is formed by the Spirit. That conscience is not the highest court of appeal can be seen from 1 Corinthians 4:4, but the believer must have a good conscience (1 Tim. 1:5). As he submits to the Spirit of God, his conscience is conformed to the will of God. The Holy Spirit “is the Spirit of truth and He brings the truth to shine upon the conscience. When He does so, the conscience becomes a fully informed conscience.” In the matter of guidance, then, conscience plays an important role if it is enlightened by Christ and sensitized by the Spirit of God.

C. Strengthened by the Spirit

Writing from prison Paul expressed confidence in his letter to the Philippians that his trials would result in deliverance (1:19). Just what he means by that is not quite certain. It could mean physical deliverance, or that God will not permit him to be put to shame (v. 20), or that he will be saved in the day of Christ, or, quite generally, that all will be well in the end. In any case, he has two good reasons for being confident: the prayers of the Philippians and the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The intercession of his friends and the rich supply of the Spirit of Christ are the two sources which inspire Paul’s confidence that Christ will be made great, whether by life or death (v. 20). The noun “supply” (*epichoregia*) is found only here and in Ephesians 4:16 (the verb is more common), and indicates abundant supply.

Bonnard thinks this expression is an allusion to the promise of Jesus to his disciples that the Spirit would come to their aid when they had to face human tribunals (Mk. 13:11; Lk. 12:12). Lohmeyer suggests that it is the help of the Spirit in special need—help in a moment of crisis. In the face of martyrdom Paul looked to the Holy Spirit to give him the strength he needed to remain true to Jesus and to be a good witness to his Lord.

Ephesians speaks more generally of the strengthening of the Spirit. In his second prayer in that letter Paul asks that the readers “be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man” (Eph. 3:16). The “inner man” is not the “new nature” (Eph. 4:24), but a kind of synonym for the “I” (Rom. 7:17, 20), the heart, the real person. Masson points out that there is little difference between the work of the Spirit in the “inner man” and the expression “that Christ dwell through faith in your hearts.” “To have Christ dwelling in us and to have the Spirit dwelling in us are the same thing. Indeed, it is precisely by the Spirit that Christ dwells in our hearts.” The strengthening in the inner man which the Spirit effects is generous, “according to the riches of his glory.” The end result of the strengthening by the Spirit is the knowledge of the love of Christ (vv. 18, 19)—a knowledge unattainable by the person outside of Christ (1 Cor. 2:14).

When we speak of being strengthened by the Spirit we should remember that God’s power is made manifest in weakness (2 Cor. 12:10). The quest for spiritual power can be quite irreligious if one seeks it for one’s own gratification. It induces precisely that self-centeredness which the whole experience of religion is designed to annihilate.

It is not power promised for power's sake, or power for our sake. It is not influence promised for the sake of influence. It is not power to bolster our image or our ego. It is not power so that we can dominate other people's lives or manipulate and control their thinking, their emotions, or their wills. It is not our power in place of our weakness. It is God's power manifest in our weakness. It is God's power using our human weakness as a platform on which it can be seen to be God's power; God's power using our frail storm lamp as a holder from which to shine into the hearts of men; God's power is a tent surrounding us, supporting the framework of the weakness of our human nature. The weakness remains—the power transcends it.

Such observations are in line with what Paul wrote to the Romans: "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness" (8:26a). "Weakness" is a comprehensive term and covers the whole range of human infirmities that characterize our life here on earth. But we are not left to ourselves; the Spirit comes to our aid and strengthens us.

D. Transformed by the Spirit

A fundamental motif of all New Testament ethical teachings is that by faith in Jesus Christ and the presence of the Spirit the believer has a foretaste of what he will become in the future. He is already holy, but he will become so fully only in the end. The new life which the Spirit inaugurated has not yet been completed; the Christian is in the process of transformation—of sanctification—and the Spirit plays an active role in this process. Of course we must not view sanctification individualistically; this transformation of character takes place within the community of the saints. In the interim, between the cross and the parousia, the Holy Spirit is at work transforming the church into the image of Christ.

This is expressed nowhere so vividly as in 2 Corinthians 3:18. "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." Whereas Paul speaks repeatedly of the final transformation of the believer into the image of Christ (1 Cor. 15:49; Rom. 8:29; Phil. 3:21), here the emphasis lies on the process of transformation that goes on daily.

In a sense 2 Corinthians 3:18 is the high point of the argument of the entire chapter. In contrast to the old order, where Moses alone stood before God "with unveiled face" (Ex. 34:29ff.), this is now the privilege of all the saints. The attempt to restrict the "all" to ministers of the gospel and not to Christians generally is misdirected. The verb *katoptrizo* generally means "to behold oneself in a mirror." Some versions prefer to render it as "reflecting as a mirror"; while this would suit the context quite well in the sense that the Christian reflects the glory which he has seen, it is more natural to suppose it is by "beholding" the image of Christ, rather than by reflecting it, that the Christian becomes changed. Whatever may be the exact significance of this difficult word, the main emphasis of the verse is on the transformation into the image of Christ as he contemplates the glory of the Lord.

"From glory to glory" may mean that the glory which the believer sees in Christ creates a similar glory in him; or that the believer reflects the glory which comes from Christ; or that the Christian advances from one stage of glory to another as he is transformed by God's Spirit. If the latter, then this process of transformation is in anticipation of future glory. By the Spirit's work in transforming the saints the future glory seems to be experienced proleptically.

This reproduction of the image of Christ in the lives of his people is the Spirit's most congenial ministry, and forms a preparation for that day when Christ, their true life, will be manifested, and they too "will be

manifested with him in glory” (Colossians 3:4), wearing in its perfection “the image of the man of heaven” (1 Corinthians 15:49).

The general thrust of the passage seems to be that the Spirit, who is the power of the exalted Lord, transforms the believer into the image of Christ. This process of transformation into the image of Christ is elsewhere called “sanctification.” “That the work of the Spirit in the Church is primarily that of sanctification is emphasized by the application to Him of the epithet Holy,” says J. G. Davies.

We have already mentioned the passage from 1 Peter where the believers are said to be “sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ” (1:2). When the gospel is proclaimed the Holy Spirit lays hold of those who respond in obedience, plucks them out of the realm of the profane, and puts them into the sphere of the sacred. In 1 Corinthians 6:11, the Spirit is related to the washing, sanctification, and justification of the believer. Also, we are reminded of the passage in 2 Thessalonians where Paul says that the salvation of the readers occurred “through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth” (2:13). All these passages, however, refer to the principal “setting apart” of the believer for God and his service which takes place at conversion. This is true also of Romans 15:16, where Paul claims that his Gentile converts (who were regarded by some Jewish Christians as unclean because they were not circumcised) were in fact “sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”

Sanctification, however, is not only an initial act but a process; holiness must be “perfected” (2 Cor. 7:1). This aspect of the Spirit’s activity is portrayed quite realistically in 1 Thessalonians 4:1–8. Before exhorting his readers to sexual purity, Paul puts the whole matter on a high plane by saying: “This is the will of God, your sanctification” (v. 3). He then touches upon a particular area of sanctification, namely, sexual morality. Very likely he is repeating at this point what he had given his converts orally. Christian missionaries in that early period seem to have had a common core of ethical teachings, as may be seen by comparing Paul’s instructions with those of Peter (e.g., 1 Pet. 1:13–22).

Not only are the Thessalonians to strive after holiness because it is God’s will and God is an avenger of evil, but also because they are called to holiness (v. 7). What is more, those who treat the question of sanctification lightly despise God, “who gives his Holy Spirit to you” (v. 8). The implication is that the one who treats sexual aberrations lightly sins against the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit.

Usually Paul speaks of the Spirit as having been given, but here the Spirit is a gift of God which comes to man continuously. The one who carries on in his pagan ways with impunity is not simply breaking a human code, he is sinning against both God and his gift, the Holy Spirit, by which he is present with his people. We have mentioned earlier the references to the indwelling of the Spirit in the believer’s life, obligating him to holy living (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). Also, we have mentioned the power of the Spirit in overcoming the flesh in the Christian’s daily walk (Gal. 5:16–26). “The Spirit is the sanctifying agency in the lives of believers; he wages perpetual warfare against the flesh, but he is more powerful than the flesh, and can put the flesh progressively out of action in those lives which are yielded to his control.”

Sanctification is both a present possession as well as an ongoing process effected by God’s Spirit. And while the believer cannot change himself, the transformation of his life does not happen automatically. All of God’s gifts demand a response, and the writer to the Hebrews can exhort his readers to strive after holiness “without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). Sanctification is not an option for the one who has been saved by God’s grace; the desire to be transformed into the image of Christ arises out of the initial sanctification by the Spirit by which we are set apart for God and which calls for separation from the evil and the profane. While striving for perfection, however, the believer recognizes that perfect holiness is a state to which he will attain

only in glory. Like Paul, he must forever forget what is behind and strain forward, pressing on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:12–14).

For those who have grown weary in their struggle against the evil of their hearts and the weakness of their human nature, it comes as a great relief to know that God's Spirit is at work in their lives seeking constantly to transform them into Christ's image.

Source: 9

1 Corinthians 2:6–13

Among mature believers Paul does speak wisdom, but not the wisdom of this age or the kind that impresses its rulers, who are already passing away. The wisdom he speaks is God's secret wisdom, hidden in former times yet planned for our benefit before the world began. The Corinthians loved philosophical debate. Paul refused to entertain them with it. Worldly wisdom never saved anyone, and the wisdom that appeals to this age's rulers offers nothing. Those "rulers" are best understood, in light of 2:8, as the people who took part in Jesus' crucifixion, not as demonic powers.

The "mature" are not the highly trained. They are those the Spirit has enlightened and who have received salvation, in contrast to those who rejected the message (1:21–23; 2:14). God's secret wisdom is his offer of salvation to all through the cross. It stays hidden to human philosophy. Only the Spirit reveals it (2:10). God set this plan in place before creation. He knew the whole story of creation, fall, and salvation through his Son before he made the world. The phrase is literally "for our glory." Despite the Fall, God would bring some to glory.

The Corinthians thought they could outgrow the simple message of Christ. Worldly wisdom analyzes Jesus and stops at the cross, as if the teacher had met a tragic end. God's wisdom makes Christ, the cross, and the resurrection central. Beware any teaching, however fascinating, that tries to add to what Jesus accomplished. All that God has revealed still begins and ends with Christ.

None of the rulers of this age understood the plan. If they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. "Rulers" means the leaders in Palestine (Pharisees, Sadducees, Herod) and the Roman authorities (Pilate and those under him). Paul's irony is sharp: the people trying to get rid of a nuisance were carrying out God's will. The one the world counted wise and powerful killed was the Lord of glory, God incarnate.

"As it is written" here gathers an Old Testament theme (Psalm 31:20; Isaiah 52:15; 64:4; 65:17) more than it quotes one verse. Human senses cannot grasp what God has prepared for those who love him. The future blessings of heaven are beyond us, yet believers trust them because God has revealed them by his Spirit. "Revealed it to us" most likely means all who have received the Spirit and can see in Scripture the future God is preparing. The Spirit, himself God, gives glimpses of that plan. Only the Spirit searches the deep things of God and can open the mystery now made known: salvation through Jesus' death and resurrection.

We cannot imagine all God has in store, in this life or eternity. He will make a new heaven and a new earth (Isaiah 65:17; Revelation 21:1), and we will live with him forever. Until then the Spirit comforts and guides us. That hope gives courage to endure and to resist temptation. This world is not all there is. We do not know heaven's details. Scripture gives a glimpse, and we are sure Christ has great blessings for those who trust him.

Reject any picture of heaven that is small, boring, or trite. Our thoughts of heaven start here: we will be with Christ (John 14:3). Whatever we can imagine is only a hint of what God can do.

No one knows another person's thoughts except that person, and no one knows God's thoughts except God's Spirit. The only way to know God is to have his Spirit, and the only way to receive the Spirit is to accept by faith Christ's sacrifice. The Spirit is a distinct person, one in essence with the Father. Jesus promised the Counselor, the Spirit of truth, who would come from the Father, convict the world, guide believers into all truth, and glorify Christ by taking what is the Father's and making it known (John 15:26; 16:7–8, 13–15).

The Corinthians were arguing over personalities and forgetting that God reveals himself by the Spirit. The best teachers never say more about God than they have received, and they remain human. They are part of God's training, but they cannot replace the Spirit. Prayer, Scripture, and obedience all take time. Their fruit depends on reliance on the Spirit.

"We" sets believers over against unbelievers. Believers have not received the spirit of the world. That is not a power equal to God. It is the wisdom of this age, human effort and philosophy (1:20; 2:6; 3:19). Believers have received the Spirit who is from God (Galatians 3:5), so they can understand what God has freely given: salvation through the death of his Son, opened to them by the Spirit.

Paul's critics wanted human eloquence. No human wisdom can carry God's wisdom. Believers speak words the Spirit gives, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths. Paul's words carry authority because their source is the Spirit, not his private opinion. Under the Spirit's inspiration he wrote God's thoughts. Believers still pass on the gospel the same way, trusting the Spirit to speak spiritual truth. That is what Paul preached, what the Corinthians believed, and how the message still spreads.

Source: 10

Living Out the Holy Spirit's Presence

Living out the Holy Spirit in our lives means embracing a fundamentally different approach to discipleship—one rooted not in self-effort but in moment-by-moment dependence on God's indwelling presence.

The essence of Christian spirituality involves living in line with "Spirit reality," which Paul describes through metaphors of walking by the Spirit and keeping in step with the Spirit as ways to describe this "new eon" spirituality.[1] This isn't a rigid formula but a lifelong journey of discernment rather than a prepackaged template that predetermines how believers are to live in particular contexts and situations.[1] The phrase "live by the Spirit" emphasizes moment-by-moment contact with and guidance by the Holy Spirit for daily decisions and activities, requiring continuous action where we remain present to him and stay open to his guidance and correction.[2]

The Spirit's work produces visible transformation. The Holy Spirit guides believers into love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, empowering holy and just living and giving believers freedom to live a life of service patterned after Christ.[1] Yet this empowerment extends beyond personal virtue—the Spirit also leads the church into witness and mission.[1]

The crucial shift involves recognizing that Jesus doesn't just call us to follow him and then leave us to muster up willpower to obey; he calls us and then empowers us through his presence in the person of the Holy

Spirit.[3] Jesus lived his human life fully dependent on the Holy Spirit, which was the divine power by which he overcame his human limitations, rose above his human weakness, and won out over his human mortality.[3] The same Holy Spirit who empowered Jesus is present and available to us, equipping us to hear from God and do what he says.[3]

This requires active receptivity. Paul prayed for God to strengthen believers with power through his Spirit in their inner being and then encouraged them to “be filled with the Spirit.”[4] The power of the Spirit is always available, for the person of the Spirit is always available.[5] Living out the Spirit means abandoning the exhausting cycle of self-generated motivation and instead remaining open to divine empowerment for every dimension of life—family, work, church, and community witness.

Sources: 11-15

Spiritual Applications of Living Empowered by the Holy Spirit

1. Talk to the Counselor, and listen when He talks. Jesus did not send a program. He sent a Person. “He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth” (John 14:16–17). A counselor listens, then speaks. Application: before you decide, ask Him. Then be quiet long enough to hear. Many Christians talk about the Holy Spirit and never talk to Him.
2. Stop living like an orphan. Jesus said, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:18), and “He lives with you and will be in you” (John 14:17). Application: fear, panic, and “I have to figure this out alone” are orphan habits. The Spirit is with you and in you. Protection is not a bunker. It is His presence.
3. Let Him teach you and remind you, instead of skimming Jesus. “The Counselor, the Holy Spirit... will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26). Application: read the words of Jesus slowly. Ask the Spirit to bring them back when you are tempted, accused, or about to open a door. What He reminds you of is what you obey.
4. Do not call conviction “emotionalism.” Jesus said when the Spirit comes, “He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin” (John 16:8). Application: if your heart is troubled over a real sin, that is not a mood. That is the Counselor. Repent. Do not mock the move of the Spirit and call a motionless life “balanced.”
5. Take His peace instead of the world’s fear. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27). Application: the world gives chaos and then tells you to manage it. Jesus gives His peace and then commands you not to live afraid. Receive it. Do not negotiate with fear.
6. Let Him tell you what you do not know yet. “He will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you” (John 16:13–14). Application: closed doors are not always failure. In Acts 16 the Spirit kept Paul out of Asia and Bithynia, then sent him to Macedonia (Acts 16:6–10). Ask, “Are You warning me, redirecting me, or preparing me?” Then obey what He shows.

7. Stop listening to the wrong voices. In the sermon, Pastor Brad looked at a friend who said his call into ministry was crazy! That was not the Spirit. Jesus said the Spirit of truth guides into all truth (John 16:13). Application: test the voice. If it denies what Jesus said, it is the wrong counselor. Family, friends, and “glorified TikTokers” do not outrank the Spirit of truth. Hear Him.
8. Keep on being filled. A bulb is not a light until it has power. “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18). The Greek is continuous: keep on being filled. Application: yesterday’s filling will not run today’s house, marriage, or family . Ask again and Stay connected to the Holy Spirit.
9. Live by the Spirit, and keep in step with Him. “Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Galatians 5:16). “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25) This is moment-by-moment contact, not a one-time achievement. Application: when His will and your desire clash, do not negotiate. Walk. The outcome is not small. “If by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live” (Romans 8:13–14).
10. Pray in the Spirit, and do not put out His fire. “Pray in the Spirit on all occasions” (Ephesians 6:18). “Pray in the Holy Spirit” (Jude 20). “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire” (1 Thessalonians 5:19). “Guard the good deposit... with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us” (2 Timothy 1:14). Application: protection for you and your family is not more effort. It is staying open. Pray. Do not quench Him. Guard what He entrusted to you by His help, not yours.

(Rev. Brad Standfest & Logos Bible Program)

Friends... protect your lives and families by living by the power of the Spirit.

Resources:

All Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, New International Version, 1984.

[1] Rev. Brad Standfest, [2] Mark J. Keown, *Discovering the New Testament: An Introduction to Its Background, Theology, and Themes: The Pauline Letters* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 2:476–477. [3] Michael R. Wagenman, *Together for the World: The Book of Acts*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew, *Transformative Word* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 35. [4] Etienne Veto, *The Breath of God: An Essay on the Holy Spirit in the Trinity* (New York, NY: Cascade Books, 2019). [5] Kyle Strobel and John Coe, *When God Seems Distant: Surprising Ways God Deepens Our Faith and Draws Us Near* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2026), 195. [6] Gordon T. Smith, *Evangelical, Sacramental & Pentecostal: Why the Church Should Be All Three* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2017), 112. [7] Bruce B. Barton, *Galatians*, *Life Application Bible Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1994), 178–179. [8] Max Anders, *Galatians–Colossians*, *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 71. [9] Ewert, David. 2004. *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers. [10] Barton, Bruce B., and Grant R. Osborne. 1999. *1 & 2 Corinthians*. *Life Application Bible Commentary*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House. (Paraphrased Version for Shorter Reading) [11] Jeannine K. Brown, “New Testament Foundations of Christian Spirituality,” in *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Glen G. Scorgie (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 49. [12] Bruce B. Barton, *Galatians*, *Life Application Bible Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1994), 178. [13] Tammy Melchien, *Choosing the Opposite: How the Sermon on the Mount Helps Us Rethink Our Assumptions, Recalibrate Our Instincts, and Rediscover the Way of Jesus* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2025), 168, 170.

[14] Mark J. Boda, Haggai, Zechariah, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 285. [15] Mike Beaumont and Martin Manser, The Handbook of Bible Promises, 2020, 142.

Sermon Notes:

Week 5 Targeted Series: Living Empowered by the Holy Spirit

Good Morning and Happy Sunday Everyone...

I hope you all had a fantastic weekend and are ready to hear God's Word...

Today we are concluding our series, Targeted...

The Bible makes it clear Satan is the prince of the air who leads the whole world astray...

He schemes. He sifts. He accuses... And he looks for an open door in your life to take you out...

The great news for us is...

"...the Reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" 1 John 3:8b

Yes... We are targeted... But Jesus didn't tell us to hide in a cave or bury ourselves in a bunker...

So, the real question is... If we are targeted, how do we live out our Christian lives and remain protected?

The Bible says... We are to live our lives empowered by the Holy Spirit...

The Holy Spirit is part of the Godhead... Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...

The Holy Spirit is not a new created God that showed up in the New Testament...

The Holy Spirit always was, and was part of creation...

Genesis 1:2 says...

"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."

The Holy Spirit, in my opinion, is the most underestimated power not tapped into by Christians... and the Christian church... particularly in America...

Over the last several years the Holy Spirit has been openly mocked by "glorified TikTokers & YouTubers"...

Moves of the Holy Spirit have been classified as emotionalism... (How about your lives are motionless.) Sorry!!

I honestly don't know what Bible "Christians" are reading...

Friends... The Holy Spirit is the power of God... The Holy Spirit is a gift for Christians to use...

Please don't take my word for it... Let's start with what Jesus said.

Exact quotes from Jesus

"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. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ... All this I have spoken while still with you. 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. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. ... Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin ... I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 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. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you."

(Exact Quotes from Jesus John 14:15-18, 25-27; John 16:5-8, 12-15)

Just by Jesus' words, how does the Holy Spirit empower our lives...

He is a Counselor... What's a Counselor do? Listen and speak to us... Give advice...

The Holy Spirit will be with you and live in you.

He will teach you and remind you.

He will convict us of sin.

He will guide and give us truth.

The Holy Spirit will take from what belongs to Jesus and make it known to us, things we do not know.

I am a very black and white person... And either you believe in Jesus' words or you don't...

Speaking of the Holy Spirit... the Holy Spirit gave me a word of wisdom for the Christians and the global Christian church...

God is a supernatural God, but many Christians have become skeptics...

After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, living empowered by the Holy Spirit was a normal way of life...

A good friend said, no way, that's crazy... He's not called.

Hear me... Some of you are listening to the wrong voices...

I want to read what the Apostle Paul said to the Corinthian church, who was in grave danger from operating in dysfunction...

It was a word of encouragement to center them back to a Holy Spirit mindset...

Read 1 Cor. 2:6-13

Christians... If you want to protect your lives and your families... Live by the Spirit...

Here's what scholar Barton says about living in the Spirit... I quote:

Living by the Spirit means operating under divine empowerment rather than relying on your own willpower. The Spirit provides the power needed to follow when his will conflicts with natural desire. The verbs are continuous: keep on living, keep on walking. This is not a one-time achievement. It is moment-by-moment decisions, and moment-by-moment contact with his guidance and correction. Practically, the Spirit illuminates the mind to understand Scripture, empowers the believer to become like Christ, convicts of sin, and creates the desire to do what God wants. The outcome is not small. Living by the Spirit leads to life; living according to the flesh leads to death (Romans 8:13–14).—Barton — Galatians LABC

Think about this... A light bulb is not a light bulb until it's filled with electricity...

I'm going to conclude with words of encouragement from God's Word about living empowered by the Holy Spirit. (APP)

Ephesians 5:18 — "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit."

Ephesians 6:18 — Pray in the Spirit...

Romans 7:6 — We Serve in a new way by the Spirit.

Romans 8:9 — We are not controlled by the Sinful nature, but by the Spirit.

Romans 5:5 — "And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

Romans 8:26-27 — The Spirit helps us...

Galatians 5:16-18 & v.25 — Live by the Spirit & be led by the Spirit... Keep in step by the Spirit

2 Timothy 1:14 — Guard yourself with the Help of the Holy Spirit

Jude 20 — "But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit."

1 Thessalonians 5:19 — "Do not put out the Spirit's fire."

Friends... Protect your lives and families by living by the power of the Spirit...

Devotional Questions:

1. Jesus said the Counselor would be with you and live in you (John 14:16–17). Read John 14:15–18 slowly. Where have you been treating the Holy Spirit as an occasional visitor instead of the One who already lives in you, and what would change in your life if you took His presence seriously?

2. Jesus promised the Spirit would teach you and remind you of everything He said (John 14:26). Open John 14:25–27. What truth from Jesus have you been forgetting under pressure, and what would change in your life if the Spirit brought that word back to mind when you needed it?
3. Jesus said the Spirit of truth will guide you into all truth and make known what belongs to Him (John 16:13–15). Read John 16:12–15. Where are you still relying on your own reasoning, and what would change in your life if you submitted your decisions to the Spirit’s guidance instead of figuring them out alone?
4. Paul told a dysfunctional church that the Spirit reveals what no eye has seen and no mind has conceived (1 Corinthians 2:9–10). Read 1 Corinthians 2:6–13. Are you listening to voices that call Spirit-led obedience crazy, and what would change in your life if you trusted what the Spirit has shown you over those voices?
5. “Be filled with the Spirit” is a command, not a suggestion (Ephesians 5:18). Read Ephesians 5:15–20. A light is not a light until it is filled with power. What is emptying you, and what would change in your life if you stayed filled with the Spirit?
6. Living by the Spirit is continuous, not a one-time event (Galatians 5:16, 25). Read Galatians 5:16–18 and verse 25. Where is your willpower failing against a desire of the flesh, and what would change in your life if you kept in step with the Spirit moment by moment?
7. The Spirit has poured God’s love into our hearts and helps us in our weakness (Romans 5:5; 8:26–27). Read Romans 5:5 and Romans 8:26–27. When you do not know how to pray for yourself or your family, what would change in your life if you stopped striving and let the Spirit intercede?
8. We are not controlled by the sinful nature if the Spirit of God lives in us (Romans 8:9), and we serve in the new way of the Spirit (Romans 7:6). Read Romans 7:6 and Romans 8:9–14. What area of your life is still running on the old system, and what would change in your life if the Spirit, not the sinful nature, controlled it?
9. Guard what has been entrusted to you with the help of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 1:14), and build yourselves up by praying in the Holy Spirit (Jude 20). Read 2 Timothy 1:13–14 and Jude 20–21. What door has been left open in your life or home, and what would change in your life if you used the Spirit’s help to shut it and stay built up?
10. “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire” (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16–22. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work (1 John 3:8). Where have you been quenching the Spirit through skepticism, fear, or neglect, and what would change in your life if His power, not your caution, protected you and your family?