

A Spirit - Led Life

A Spirit-Led Life

Ephesians 4:17-5:1

Freedom Series

There is something Saint Gregory the Great wrote more than fourteen hundred years ago that I haven't been able to get away from. Gregory was writing to pastors, warning them about the danger of sin. But what struck me was that Gregory understood something about sin that we sometimes forget. He essentially said: Be careful, because vice has a way of disguising itself as virtue. Greed can call itself being financially responsible. Harshness can call itself honesty. Uncontrolled anger can call itself righteous conviction. Cowardice can call itself patience. Laziness can call itself contentment. Pride can call itself confidence. And compromise can call itself compassion.

In other words... **Sin rarely introduces itself by its real name.** Sin doesn't walk into the room and say: "Hello. I'm bitterness. I'm here to destroy your joy." It says: "You have every right to feel this way." Lust doesn't usually say: "I would like to distort the way you see another human being." It says: "This isn't hurting anybody."

Pride doesn't say: "I would like to make your entire life revolve around you." It says: "You should know your worth." Materialism doesn't say: "I would like to slowly convince you that possessions can satisfy your soul." It says: "You worked hard. You deserve this."

Gossip doesn't say: "I want to damage another person's reputation." It says: "I just thought you should know so you can pray." Anybody been in church long enough to hear that one? Sin is deceptive. And that is exactly the language Paul uses in our passage. In Ephesians 4:22, he talks about our former way of life being corrupted by deceitful desires. Not simply desires. Deceitful desires. Desires that lie. Desires that promise something they cannot deliver. Desires that say, "If you follow me, you'll finally be free," and then quietly put another chain around your soul.

And this matters because we're in a series called Freedom. And one of the great lies of our culture is that freedom means: "I can do whatever I want." But according to Scripture, being able to do whatever you want isn't necessarily freedom. Because what happens when what you want is destroying you? What happens when your anger controls you? What happens when your appetite controls you? What happens when people's opinions control you? What happens when money controls you? What happens when your sexuality controls you? What happens when your need to win controls you? What happens when your phone controls you? What happens when resentment controls you?

You can call that freedom. But if you cannot tell it no... it might actually be slavery. Biblical freedom is something far better. **Freedom is not merely the ability to do whatever you want. Freedom is the power, through Christ, to become who God created you to be.** And that's what Paul is describing in Ephesians 4. He isn't merely telling Christians: "Stop doing bad things." This passage is far richer than that. Paul is telling them: You have been brought into Christ. You have

learned Christ. You have been given a new identity. Your mind is being renewed. You have put on a new self.

The Holy Spirit lives in you. You have been sealed for redemption. You are beloved children of God. So now... Live like the new creation you already are becoming in Christ. That's the heart of this passage. And I want us to see four movements in Paul's argument.

1. A Spirit-Led Life Begins With a New Identity, Not Better Behavior

Ephesians 4:17-24

Paul begins strongly. He says: "You must no longer walk as the Gentiles do." Now remember who Paul is writing to. He's writing largely to Gentile Christians. So when Paul says, "Don't walk like the Gentiles," he's not talking about ethnicity. He's talking about a way of life separated from God. He's saying: "That was once your world. That was once your way of thinking. That was once your way of living. But something has happened to you."

And notice how Paul describes the old life. He talks about futility in thinking. Darkened understanding. Alienation from the life of God. Hardness of heart. Callousness. Sensuality. Greed. Impurity. It's a picture of the human life disconnected from its Creator. And here's what I find interesting. Paul starts with the mind. He doesn't begin with behavior. He begins with thinking. Because what you believe eventually becomes how you live. Your life moves in the direction of your deepest convictions. That's true spiritually. That's true relationally. That's true culturally. That's true emotionally.

We are living right now in a culture that is constantly discipling us. Every advertisement is discipling you. Every social-media algorithm is discipling you. Every political commentator is discipling you. Every influencer is discipling you. Every television show is carrying some vision of what the good life looks like. And most of the time the message is some variation of: Follow your heart. Trust your instincts. Define yourself. Protect yourself. Promote yourself. Express yourself. Indulge yourself. Put yourself first.

And the gospel comes along and says something radically different. The gospel says: Your heart needs redemption. Your instincts need formation. Your identity is received, not invented. Your life belongs to the One who gave His life for you. And Paul says: That's how you used to live.

But then verse 20 changes everything. I love this phrase. Paul says: "But that is not the way you learned Christ." What an interesting sentence. Paul doesn't say: "That isn't what you learned about Christianity." He doesn't say: "That isn't what you learned about morality." He doesn't say: "That isn't what you learned about religion." He says: You learned Christ. Christianity is not ultimately the process of mastering religious information. Christianity is knowing Jesus Christ. Christianity is union with Jesus Christ. Christianity is following Jesus Christ. Christianity is having the life of Jesus Christ increasingly formed in you. You have learned Christ.

And then Paul describes three things. Put off the old self. Be renewed in the spirit of your minds. Put on the new self. Put off. Be renewed. Put on. Now, we can hear that language and immediately

turn Christianity into a self-improvement program. “I need to work harder.” “I need to clean myself up.” “I need more discipline.” “I need to become a better person.”

But look closely at Paul's language. He says the new self has been created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Created. That's creation language. This isn't cosmetic improvement. This isn't Jesus putting a little fresh paint on the old house. This isn't spiritual behavior modification. God is doing something new. Jesus did not die merely to make a slightly nicer version of the old you. He came to make you new. And that's where the Spirit-led life begins. Not: “I need to manufacture holiness.” But: “God is renewing me.” Not: “I need to somehow invent a new identity.” But: “I have received a new identity in Christ.”

Not: “I am fighting for God to accept me.” But: “Because God has accepted me in Christ, I can now fight everything that doesn't belong in my new life.” Here's a sentence worth remembering: **You don't fight sin for an identity. You fight sin from an identity.** That's a massive difference. Some Christians are exhausted because they're constantly trying to prove to God that they are worthy of being His children. Paul says that's backwards. You belong to Christ. You have been made new. You are being renewed. Therefore, begin removing everything that contradicts who you now are.

Think about changing clothes. If you've been outside working all afternoon in the Georgia heat—cutting grass, trimming trees, sweating through everything you're wearing—and then you come inside to get ready for dinner... You don't shower and then put the filthy clothes back on. You take them off. Why? Because those clothes don't belong with where you're going. And Paul says there are things that simply don't fit you anymore. Bitterness doesn't fit anymore. Deception doesn't fit anymore. Pornography doesn't fit anymore.

Gossip doesn't fit anymore. Rage doesn't fit anymore. Greed doesn't fit anymore. Cruel speech doesn't fit anymore. Not merely because: “Christians aren't allowed to do those things.” But because: Those things don't match who you are becoming in Christ. This is what sanctification looks like. The Spirit continually brings our lives into alignment with our new identity.

And please hear the hope in this. Somebody here may hear a passage like this and think: “I've tried.” “I've tried to change.” “I've tried to stop being angry.” “I've tried to forgive.” “I've tried to control my thoughts.” “I've tried to stop that habit.” “I've tried to become different.” And eventually you begin to think: “Maybe this is just who I am.” But if you belong to Christ... sin may describe something you struggle with. It does not get to define who you are. You can say: “I have struggled with anger.” But you do not have to say: “I'm just an angry person.”

You may say: “I've struggled with lust.” But lust does not get to name you. You may say: “I've struggled with insecurity.” But insecurity does not get to determine your identity. You may have spent thirty years reacting one way. That does not mean the Holy Spirit cannot teach you another way. **Your history explains you. It does not have authority over you.** Christ does. That's freedom. And Paul's language is hopeful: Be renewed. God is at work. The Christian life isn't you standing outside a locked door desperately trying to get in. Christ has already opened the door. The Spirit is already at work.

Walk in the freedom you've been given.

2. A Spirit-Led Life Turns Freedom Into a New Way of Living

Ephesians 4:25-29

Now Paul gets incredibly practical. And I love this about Christianity. Paul can spend three chapters talking about election, adoption, redemption, reconciliation, the mystery of Christ, the church, the immeasurable love of God... And then eventually Paul says: Now let's talk about how you speak to your spouse. Let's talk about your temper. Let's talk about your job. Let's talk about your mouth. Because biblical theology eventually reaches Monday morning. If your theology never reaches your relationships, your workplace, your phone, your conversations and your reactions... something is wrong. What the Spirit changes inside of you eventually becomes visible around you. Paul starts giving examples.

First: Put away falsehood and speak truth. Why? Because we are members of one another. Notice Paul's logic. He doesn't merely say: "Don't lie because lying is bad." He says: "You are connected to one another." The gospel has formed a new community. You're part of a body. And lying destroys the trust that makes community possible. Here's what a Spirit-led life looks like: We become people who can be trusted with the truth. No manipulation. No carefully edited versions of the story designed to make ourselves look better. No saying one thing to someone's face and something else after they leave. No fake online persona.

No pretending. No exaggeration to get attention. No dishonesty because the truth might cost us something. Because Christ is truth, the Spirit produces people who increasingly tell the truth. Then Paul moves to anger. "Be angry and do not sin." That verse is important because apparently anger itself isn't always sinful. There are things that should make Christians angry. Abuse should make us angry. Racism should make us angry. Human trafficking should make us angry. The exploitation of children should make us angry. Corruption should make us angry. The destruction caused by sin should make us angry. Jesus Himself displayed righteous anger. So the issue isn't whether you'll ever experience anger.

The question is: What does your anger produce? Because righteous anger wants restoration. Sinful anger wants revenge. Righteous anger says: "This is wrong and should be made right." Sinful anger says: "You hurt me and now I want you to hurt." And Paul says: "Do not let the sun go down on your anger." In other words: Don't give anger room to unpack. Don't give it a drawer. Don't give it a toothbrush. Don't give it the Wi-Fi password. Don't let anger move into your soul and start receiving mail. Deal with it. Because verse 27 says unresolved anger can give the devil an opportunity.

That's sobering. There are spiritual vulnerabilities we create by refusing to deal with relational wounds. And I think this is incredibly relevant to our culture because we live in what could almost be called an anger economy. People have figured out that outrage gets clicks. Anger keeps you watching. Anger keeps you scrolling. Anger keeps you sharing. Anger keeps you commenting. There are entire industries that benefit financially from keeping you perpetually irritated. And sometimes Christians spend hours every week being disciplined by outrage and then wonder why they have no peace. Listen: You can be informed without being inflamed. You can care deeply without being consumed.

You can stand firmly for truth without becoming hateful toward people. **The Spirit does not make you passive. He makes you governed.** That's different. Then Paul moves to stealing. "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands..." Now watch the transformation. Paul doesn't stop with: Stop stealing. He says: Work. And he doesn't stop with: Work. He says: Work so that you have something to share with anyone in need. That's incredible. The gospel doesn't merely turn a taker into a non-taker. The gospel turns a taker into a giver. Do you see the difference?

Moralism says: Don't steal. The gospel says: Become generous. Moralism says: Stop doing wrong. The Spirit says: Let me make you into someone who actively does good. That's the pattern throughout this passage. Don't just stop lying. Become truthful. Don't just stop sinful anger. Become reconciled. Don't just stop stealing. Become generous. Don't just stop destructive speech. Become someone whose words give grace. That's why Christianity is bigger than sin management. **The Spirit doesn't merely remove vice; He grows virtue.** There is a positive vision of holiness. Holiness isn't spending your entire life thinking: Don't do this. Don't do that. Don't do that. Don't think that.

Don't say that. Don't go there. Biblical holiness means becoming the kind of person whose life increasingly looks like Jesus. Which brings Paul to our speech. Verse 29: Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths. The word carries the idea of something rotten, diseased, decaying. Paul says: Don't let rotten words come out. And before you start thinking only about profanity... Paul's category is much bigger than that. You can speak without using a single curse word and still have rotten speech. Sarcasm can be rotten. Gossip can be rotten. Constant criticism can be rotten. Passive aggression can be rotten. Mockery can be rotten.

Humiliation can be rotten. Speaking to your spouse like they're an inconvenience can be rotten. Speaking to your children in ways that crush their spirit can be rotten. Commenting online in ways you would never speak face-to-face can be rotten. And what does Paul replace it with? Words that are good for building up. Words that fit the occasion. Words that give grace to those who hear. Think about that. Your mouth can become an instrument through which someone experiences grace. You can walk into a room and build courage in somebody. You can make someone feel seen. You can tell the truth with love.

You can encourage somebody who is barely hanging on. You can speak life into your child. You can honor your spouse. You can strengthen a coworker. You can thank somebody everyone else overlooks. You can apologize. You can forgive. You can use the same mouth that once wounded people to begin healing people. And that is evidence of the Spirit's work. A Spirit-filled life isn't always spectacular. Sometimes it sounds like a gracious sentence spoken at exactly the right moment. Sometimes we think being Spirit-led means something dramatic has to happen. And certainly the Spirit can work dramatically. But Ephesians 4 says Spirit-filled living can look incredibly ordinary.

Tell the truth. Control your anger. Work honestly. Be generous. Watch your mouth. Build people up. That's deeply spiritual. The Spirit-filled life is not less practical than ordinary life. It transforms ordinary life.

3. A Spirit-Led Life Is Sensitive to the Spirit Who Has Sealed You

Ephesians 4:30-32

Then we reach what may be the theological center of this entire section. Verse 30: “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” Now stop there. Paul could have said: Don't make the Spirit angry. He could have said: Don't disobey the Spirit. But he says: Don't grieve the Holy Spirit. That's relational language. You don't grieve a force. You don't grieve electricity. You don't grieve gravity. You grieve a person. The Holy Spirit is not a religious energy. He is not a spiritual vibe. He is not God's electricity. He is God. And if you belong to Christ, the Holy Spirit dwells in you.

Which means Christianity isn't merely: “What would Jesus do?” Christianity includes the stunning reality: God Himself is present with you by His Spirit. So when Paul talks about the new life, this is not theoretical. The Spirit of God is actively involved. He convicts. He leads. He renews. He strengthens. He produces holiness. He points us toward Christ. And our lives can either move in harmony with His work or resist what He is doing. Paul says: Don't grieve Him.

And look at the context. What grieves the Holy Spirit? We sometimes imagine only enormous scandalous sins. And certainly those grieve Him. But look at Paul's list. Bitterness. Wrath. Anger. Clamor. Slander. Malice. In other words... The way you treat people matters deeply to the Spirit of God. That's convicting. You cannot say: “I love Jesus...” while constantly treating people Jesus died for with contempt. You cannot separate spirituality from relationships. The vertical and horizontal dimensions of Christianity are connected. And Paul says: Get rid of bitterness.

Now bitterness is interesting because bitterness feels powerful. Bitterness says: “If I forgive them, they win.” “If I let this go, what they did doesn't matter.” “If I stop being angry, I'm letting them off the hook.” But bitterness doesn't punish them. It imprisons you. Someone said bitterness is like drinking poison and hoping the other person dies. You've probably heard that line before because it rings true. You replay the conversation. You rehearse the betrayal. You imagine what you should have said. You check their social media. You tell the story again. And again. And again. And every time you tell it, you experience the injury again.

Paul says: There is another way. Verse 32: “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another...” And then he gives the foundation. “...as God in Christ forgave you.” There it is. That's Christianity. The basis for forgiveness is not that what happened wasn't serious. The basis for forgiveness is not that you're pretending you weren't wounded. The basis for forgiveness is not that the other person apologized perfectly. Paul says: Look at Christ. “As God in Christ forgave you.” The cross becomes the pattern. The cross becomes the power. The cross becomes the reference point. You say: “But they don't deserve forgiveness.” Neither did we.

That's what makes grace grace. You say: “But they hurt me.” Yes. And biblical forgiveness never requires us to call evil good. Forgiveness doesn't always mean immediate reconciliation. Reconciliation requires repentance, truth and rebuilt trust. Forgiveness does not mean eliminating appropriate boundaries. But forgiveness means: I surrender my right to vengeance. I refuse to let what you did become lord over my soul. I place judgment into the hands of God. Why? Because

I've been forgiven. And here's where the Spirit-led life becomes so beautiful. Paul isn't telling wounded people: "Just get over it." He's saying: There is a power available to you greater than the wound.

There is grace available to you greater than the offense. There is a Spirit living within you stronger than the bitterness trying to consume you. What happened to you may explain your pain, but through Christ it does not have to dictate your future.

And don't miss the second half of verse 30. Paul says the Spirit has sealed you for the day of redemption. That word "sealed" points to ownership, authenticity, security. The Spirit is God's mark on His people. And Paul says that seal points toward a future day. The day of redemption. Meaning: God isn't finished. You're still becoming. Your salvation has a destination. The same God who started this work intends to carry His people home.

And I think somebody needs that encouragement. Because sometimes sanctification feels slow. You thought you'd be further along by now. You thought you'd have conquered that struggle by now. You thought you'd be more patient by now. You thought you'd pray more consistently. You thought you'd be less anxious. You thought that wound wouldn't bother you anymore. And yes, we should take sin seriously. But we should also take the Holy Spirit seriously. Listen to me: **The presence of a struggle does not mean the absence of the Spirit.** The fact that you are struggling against something you once happily surrendered to may itself be evidence that something has changed.

Before Christ you may have lived in something without conviction. Now you hate it. Now you fight it. Now you confess it. Now you bring it into the light. Now you want freedom. Don't confuse the battle with defeat. Dead people don't fight. The presence of battle may mean the Spirit is doing renovation. And renovation is messy.

If you've ever remodeled a room, halfway through the renovation it looks worse than when you started. Drywall everywhere. Dust everywhere. Wires hanging out. Flooring ripped up. You walk into the room and think: What have we done? But the contractor knows something you don't. The room isn't being destroyed. It's being remade. Some of you are looking at the mess God is confronting in you and thinking: "I'm failing." And the Spirit may be saying: "No. I'm exposing this because I'm healing this." Conviction is not God abandoning you. Conviction is often evidence that God is working in you. He loves you too much to leave every room of your heart exactly the way He found it.

And Paul says: Don't grieve Him. Listen. Respond. Confess. Repent. Obey. When He puts His finger on something, stop defending it. When He exposes something, stop renaming it. When the Spirit calls it pride, don't call it personality. When He calls it bitterness, don't call it discernment. When He calls it lust, don't call it curiosity. When He calls it greed, don't call it ambition. When He calls it gossip, don't call it concern. When He calls it unforgiveness, don't call it boundaries.

Remember Gregory's warning. Sin loves costumes. So invite the Spirit to tell you the truth. "God, show me what's actually happening in me." Because... Freedom begins when we stop defending what the Spirit is trying to deliver us from.

4. A Spirit-Led Life Looks Like the Father Because You Are His Beloved Child

Ephesians 5:1

And all of this brings us to Ephesians 5:1. And I think this may be one of the most staggering commands in the New Testament. “Therefore...” Whenever Paul says therefore, we need to ask: What's the therefore there for? He's connecting everything. God in Christ forgave you. Therefore... “Be imitators of God.” Imitators. Of God. That's an audacious command. Paul doesn't say: Admire God. Believe in God. Sing about God. Study God. All of those things matter. He says: Imitate God. Live in such a way that the family resemblance starts becoming visible.

And then Paul gives us the key to how this is even possible. He says: “as beloved children.” Don't miss the order. He doesn't say: Imitate God so that you can become beloved children. He says: Imitate God as beloved children. Identity comes before imitation. Relationship comes before resemblance. Grace comes before obedience. God's love comes before your transformation. This is critical. Because religion says: Behave like this and maybe God will love you. The gospel says: In Christ, you are loved. Now learn to live like your Father. **Christian obedience is not an audition for adoption. It is the family resemblance of people who have already been brought home.**

Think about children. Little children naturally imitate their parents. They repeat phrases. They copy mannerisms. Sometimes embarrassingly accurately. You hear your kid say something and think: “Where did they learn that?” And then everybody at the table looks at you. Apparently that's me. Children imitate what they see. And Paul says: You have a Father. You have been brought into a family. Now watch Him. See His kindness. See His mercy. See His holiness. See His patience. See His forgiveness. See His generosity. And begin to resemble Him.

Now somebody says: “Cedric, that sounds impossible.” Imitate God? Exactly. If Christianity were simply human effort, this would be hopeless. If the Christian life were: “Here's Jesus. Do your best to copy Him.” we would all fail. But that isn't the gospel. The God you're commanded to imitate is the God whose Spirit lives within you. That's why I've called this message: A Spirit-Led Life. Because the Christian life isn't imitation from a distance. It's transformation from within. You aren't standing two thousand years away from Jesus saying: “I sure hope I can act like Him.” The Holy Spirit is at work conforming God's people to the likeness of Christ.

So yes... You can become more patient. You can become more gentle. You can become truthful. You can learn to forgive. You can become generous. You can speak differently. You can respond differently. You can parent differently. You can date differently. You can handle money differently. You can disagree politically differently. You can navigate social media differently. You can handle success differently. You can handle disappointment differently. You can deal with your enemies differently. Not because you suddenly have extraordinary willpower. But because the Spirit of the living God is at work in ordinary people.

Church, I desperately want us to believe this. Because I think sometimes Christians have developed a strange theology where we believe God has enough power to save us from hell... but apparently not enough power to transform our Tuesday. We believe Jesus can raise the dead... but we're skeptical that He can change our temper. We believe He can forgive every sin we've ever

committed... but we're not sure He can free us from pornography. We believe He created the universe... but we're not sure He can heal patterns that have existed in our family for generations. We believe the tomb is empty... but then shrug and say: "Well, this is just how I am."

No. If Christ is risen... the possibilities for transformation are enormous. The resurrection means the old order does not get the final word. Death doesn't. Sin doesn't. Your past doesn't. Your family history doesn't. Your failure doesn't. The Holy Spirit is making people new. The gospel doesn't simply promise you a different eternity. It gives you a different kind of life now. Not perfection. But transformation. Not sinlessness. But a new direction. Not effortless holiness. But Spirit-empowered holiness. Sometimes dramatic. Often gradual. But real.

And here's one of the beautiful things about this passage. What does the spectacular Spirit-led life of Ephesians 4 actually look like? Tell the truth. Handle your anger. Work honestly. Give generously. Speak graciously. Release bitterness. Practice kindness. Forgive people. Resemble your Father. That's it. There is something beautifully ordinary about biblical spirituality. **A Spirit-led life is less about spiritual spectacle and more about spiritual resemblance.** Maybe that's what we need to recover. Because sometimes we want the Spirit to do something dramatic around us while resisting what the Spirit wants to do deeply within us. We want revival. And God says: Let's talk about your bitterness.

We want breakthrough. God says: Let's talk about how you speak to your spouse. We want an encounter with God. God says: Let's talk about whether your coworkers can trust you. We want the supernatural. God says: Let's talk about forgiving the person whose name still makes your blood pressure rise. And we say: "No, Lord. I meant something spiritual." And God says: "That is spiritual." Maybe one of the greatest evidences of the supernatural work of God is when a human being responds in a way their flesh could never produce. When someone hurts you and you choose grace. When anger rises and you surrender it.

When everyone else is gossiping and you refuse. When you could manipulate the truth but you tell it. When greed says "keep it" and generosity says "give it." When pride says "make them pay" and Jesus says "forgive." When your culture says "destroy anyone who disagrees with you" and the Spirit teaches you how to speak truth in love. That's spiritual power.

Bringing It Home

So let me ask you a question. Not: Are you religious? Not: Did you go to church this week? Not: Do you know Bible verses? Not: Can you explain Christian doctrine? Here's the question: Where is the Holy Spirit currently making you more like Jesus? Because if we're walking with Christ, there ought to be places where transformation is happening.

Maybe today the Spirit is putting His finger on your anger. Not because God wants to shame you. Because God wants to free you. Maybe it's your speech. Maybe your mouth has become so sarcastic, cynical or critical that tearing people down feels normal. And the Spirit is saying: "That doesn't fit you anymore."

Maybe it's dishonesty. Maybe you've gotten comfortable presenting versions of the truth. And Jesus is saying: "That doesn't fit you anymore." Maybe it's greed. You've spent years asking: "How much can I accumulate?" And the Spirit is beginning to ask: "How much good could God do through what I've been given?"

Maybe it's bitterness. And you know exactly who I'm talking about because before I even finished the sentence their face appeared in your mind. The Spirit may be saying: "I want that wound." Not: "What happened didn't matter." Not: "Trust them immediately." Not: "Pretend everything is fine." But: "Stop allowing what they did to control what you become." Give it to Me.

Maybe it's something nobody knows about. A hidden habit. A private compromise. Something you've learned to manage. Something you've renamed. Something you've justified. And the Holy Spirit is saying: "That's part of the old clothes. Take it off." And some of you may be thinking: "I can't." You're right. Not alone. That's the whole point. Christianity isn't: "Try harder." Christianity is: "Walk with the Spirit." Stay close to Jesus. Bring your sin into the light. Stay in the Word. Confess quickly. Invite Christian community into your life. Respond to conviction. Practice obedience. Keep showing up. And trust the Spirit of God to do what you cannot manufacture.

Because the goal isn't simply that you stop doing a list of bad things. The goal is Christlikeness. Look at the progression again. The liar becomes truthful. The angry become reconciled. The thief becomes generous. The destructive speaker becomes an encourager. The bitter become tenderhearted. The unforgiving become forgiving. And the children begin to resemble their Father. That's transformation. That's freedom. That's a Spirit-led life.

Conclusion

I want you to imagine something. Imagine what would happen in a church where hundreds of people really believed this. Not simply: "Jesus forgave my sins and one day I'll go to heaven." Praise God, that's true. But imagine hundreds of people who believed: The Holy Spirit is actually transforming me right now. Imagine husbands going home believing: "The Spirit can make me more tenderhearted." Imagine wives believing: "The Spirit can free me from resentment." Imagine teenagers believing: "My identity doesn't have to come from everybody else's approval." Imagine businessmen and women believing: "My career doesn't own me. Christ does." Imagine someone trapped in pornography believing: "This does not have to be my story forever."

Imagine someone carrying anger for fifteen years believing: "I may actually be able to release this." Imagine someone who has always been harsh saying: "The Spirit can teach me gentleness." Imagine someone who grew up in a family where everyone yelled saying: "That cycle can stop with me." Imagine somebody whose father was emotionally absent saying: "Through Christ, I can become a different kind of father." Imagine somebody whose mother lived consumed by anxiety saying: "That pattern doesn't have to own my home." Imagine somebody saying: "My past may be part of my story... but Jesus gets to write what happens next." That's freedom. Church... Jesus does not simply free you from something. Jesus frees you for something.

Free to tell the truth. Free to forgive. Free to be generous. Free to speak grace. Free to release bitterness. Free to love. Free to live differently. Free to become who you were created to be. And

here's the beautiful thing: You are not doing this alone. The Holy Spirit of God has sealed you for the day of redemption. The Spirit is present. The Spirit is working. The Spirit is renewing. The Spirit is convicting. The Spirit is forming. The Spirit is leading. And because Christ has died... because Christ has risen... because the Spirit has come... change is not merely demanded of you. Change is now possible for you.

So don't put the old clothes back on. Don't return to the chains Jesus broke. Don't settle for calling bondage freedom. You have learned Christ. You have been made new. You are being renewed. You have been sealed by the Spirit. You are a beloved child. Now... walk like it. Live like it. Become who grace has made it possible for you to become. Because... A Spirit-led life is not an impossible life reserved for extraordinary Christians. It is the normal life of ordinary people who keep surrendering themselves to an extraordinary God. And maybe the prayer we need this morning is incredibly simple: "Holy Spirit... show me what needs to come off.

Renew what needs to change. Produce in me what I cannot produce myself. And make my life look more like Jesus." Because church— freedom isn't merely getting out of the old life. Freedom is finally being able to walk in the new one. Amen.