

Thinking Rightly About the Work of the Spirit

Scripture: Galatians 5:16–26

Code: 48-35

Galatians chapter 5 and verse 16: “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.”

Now this is our subject this morning and has been for the last several weeks. We’re talking about what it means to walk by the Spirit. I would just remind you, if you look up in chapter 5 to verse 5, we read there, “We through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.” What that tells us is that our salvation is a work of the Holy Spirit. It is through the Spirit, by faith, that we have been given the hope of righteousness.

You will notice also in this same passage, down in verse 25, that we live by the Spirit. Now that we have been ushered into salvation through the Spirit, we live by the Spirit. You will notice again, back in verse 18, that as we live in the Spirit we are led by the Spirit. All of these are statements of fact. We have been saved through the Spirit, we live by the Spirit, we are led by the Spirit, and then there is the one command to walk by the Spirit. That is the command, to put one spiritual step in front another and walk in the pathway of the Holy Spirit.

That is what it means to live the Christian life. And you will remember that he is confronting legalism, external ritual and ceremony, and he is saying that legalism can’t save you. That’s chapters 1 to 4. And in chapter 5, he is saying legalism can’t even sanctify you. You are not made holy by external religious behaviors, you are made holy – he says here – by walking by the Spirit. It is not external behavior, it is internal power.

And again I remind you, back in verse 19 of chapter 4, Paul says, “My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you.” Paul says, “I’ll never be satisfied. I’ll never feel like the job is finished. I’ll never feel like the delivery has been made, until you are like Christ.”

This is what the Christian life is all about. It is becoming increasingly like Christ, becoming more like Him. This is the path of sanctification. Sanctification is becoming increasingly like Christ. That is the diminishing of sin and the increase of holiness, moving us ever closer to what it is to be like Christ.

This only happens by the power of the Holy Spirit. And that we have learned from the verse in 2 Corinthians 3:18, which we've mentioned a number of times, where the apostle Paul says that, "We, with an unveiled face," – now in the new covenant – "are beholding the glory of the Lord," – that is we're looking at the glory of the Lord revealed in Scripture – "and we are being transformed into His image from one level of glory to the next, by the Lord," – who is that Spirit.

In other words, the Holy Spirit's work is to make us like Christ; therefore, the pastor's desire is to see that take place. So Paul says, "I'm in labor" – kind of spiritual labor pains – "until Christ is formed in you, until you're like Christ." That is the work of the Holy Spirit, who as we gaze at the Lord, as we express love and obedience to Him, the Spirit changes us into His image, moving us from one level of glory to the next, ever higher, increasingly like Him. Sanctification then is the work of the Holy Spirit making us more like Christ. That is sanctification.

Now the Spirit does that as we walk one step at a time. We've talked about the fact that this doesn't happen in a moment. This isn't some second esoteric event like your salvation. This is a consistent, daily, hourly routine, putting one spiritual step in front of the other, walking in the Spirit; meaning you're walking in the will of God, who is the Spirit, in conformity to the person of Christ who is God manifest.

I'm compelled as we come to this passage today, however, to just have you think with me a little bit about the Holy Spirit Himself. To think that we have living in us the Spirit of God is a stunning reality. We need to try to enrich our grasp on this great reality, and I hope I can help you to do that a little bit this morning.

I think it's pretty obvious to say that the Holy Spirit is the most ignored member of the Trinity. There is far more attention paid to God the Father and certainly God the Son than there is to God the Holy Spirit. In fact, it's safe to say He's not only ignored, but the Holy Spirit is also misunderstood, most frequently misrepresented, insulted, dishonored and even blasphemed. It seems to me that people are reluctant to say things about God that are not true; they are concerned not to dishonor God the Father. I'm convinced that most people, Christian people or people who profess to be Christians, are somewhat reluctant to say anything disparaging about the person of Jesus Christ. But it seems to be that there is just a complete freedom, almost an abandonment to say anything you want to say about the Holy Spirit, even if it isn't true.

The Holy Spirit is the most abused member of the Trinity, the most dishonored member of the Trinity; and this is a very serious issue. The first commandment is to have no other god. And the great commandment of all commandments is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and that implies worship. So we are called the highest calling of all human beings, of course, and fulfilled only by believers – and not perfectly by them in this life – but the highest calling is to worship God, to give Him the glory that He is due, and that means Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

From the book of Exodus where we have commands to worship to the book of Revelation, the last chapter, Revelation 22:9, where we again are told worship God. All through the Scriptures from the Pentateuch to the book of Revelation worship is our priority, and we are commanded on many occasions in Scripture to worship God as He is. To worship any other god or to worship God, having redefined Him, is a violation of the basic responsibility and the basic commandment that God has given. It constitutes taking God's name in vain. And in Exodus chapter 20 and verse 7, we read this: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished

who takes His name in vain.” You don’t use the name of God in any empty way, in any pointless way, in any misrepresentation; that means Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Now that is, as I said, more likely to be applied to how we treat the Father and Son than apparently how we treat the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit is abused, and has been abused, and not only on an individual level, but collectively through certain movements that have found their way into Christianity. The Holy Spirit is blasphemed, seems to me, far more frequently than the Son or the Father. And we need to be remembering that the Holy Spirit is equally God with the Son and the Father.

Looking at Scripture and just thinking about the Holy Spirit for a few minutes let me help you to understand the richness of language that defines for us the nature of the Holy Spirit. He is, in Job 33:4, the very breath of the Almighty. He is, in Hebrews 9:14, the eternal Spirit. He is, in Psalm 51:12, the generous spirit. Psalm 143:10, He is the good Spirit. Psalm 51:11, Ephesians 1 and 4, and elsewhere, the Holy Spirit. He is called the Spirit of the living God, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Father, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the Son, and the Spirit of life.

He is called in Hebrews 10 the Spirit of grace. He is, in Isaiah 11, verse 2, the Spirit of wisdom, counsel, might, understanding, knowledge, and fear – which relates to worship. In John 14 and 15, He is the Spirit of truth. In Romans 1, He is the Spirit of holiness. In 1 Peter 4, He’s the Spirit of glory. In Revelation 1, He’s the seven-fold Spirit, repeating the seven-fold designation from Isaiah 11. In John 14 and 15, His is the Comforter, the one who comes alongside to help. And in Luke 1:35, He is called the power of the Highest, the power of the Highest.

Now all of these are designations of the Holy Spirit that place Him squarely or triangularly in the Trinity. He is God, He is God the Spirit. That is not to say there are three persons independent of each other. There are three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who are one in essence – one God manifest in three persons at all times.

Now when we talk about the Holy Spirit I think we tend to hear the word “Spirit,” and when we think “spirit” we think of something that is immaterial as opposed to material. Something that is flesh is tangible, it’s material, it’s visible, it’s objective. When we think about spirit we think of something that is invisible, something that is transitory, something that is simply immaterial. That is not how to understand this word “spirit,” neither in the Old Testament or the New Testament.

In the Old Testament the word for “spirit” is *ruach* and it’s an onomatopoetic word, that is it sounds like its meaning. It’s a breathy word, *ruach*. And in the New Testament it’s *pneuma*. Again, it’s an onomatopoetic word. In both cases, in the Hebrew and the Greek, it means “air in motion,” air in motion. It’s talking about power. It’s talking about energy. It’s not talking about something that is statically immaterial.

When we think of the Spirit we can’t think of some stagnant kind of transparent ghost-like personality, we have to think of power and energy in motion. In fact, the term “spirit” is so powerful that God breathed into man and he came to life, that the Spirit of God brooded over the entire inanimate creation in Genesis 1 and it all exploded into life. So when you think of the Spirit of God and the Holy Spirit you’re not thinking of something immaterial – although He is invisible – you’re thinking of power at its highest level: infinite power, incomprehensible power, the power to create the entire universe

out of nothing, the power to recreate the entire universe into a new heaven and a new earth, and the power of life that sustains everything that exists in the universe.

In the prophet Micah we read in chapter 3, verse 8, “I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord.” So when we talk about the Holy Spirit we’re talking about God’s power: power to create, power to reveal, power to give life, power to regenerate, power to resurrect, power to glorify. Power defines the Holy Spirit. In fact, in Acts 1:8, our Lord said, “You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit is come upon you.”

It’s really important as believers that we understand that what the Lord wants us to see in telling us that the Spirit is in us, and we live in the Spirit, and we are led by the Spirit, is that we have the power of God residing in us. A third of the Old Testament uses of *ruach* refer to God’s power in a violent way. Yahweh’s *ruach* is the blast of God, the irresistible power by which He accomplishes His purposes, whether creative or destructive. He has power to create, He has power to destroy. “By *ruach* God creates everything, including the hosts of heaven,” says Psalm 33:6.

So the Holy Spirit is the power of God acting from creation to recreation, consummation. He is fully God; He possesses all of God’s attributes, participates in all of God’s works. Whatever the Father does, the Spirit does. Whatever the Son does, the Spirit does and the Father does. Whatever the Spirit does, the Son and the Father do. They do all things together, they are inseparable; and yet in a mysterious way, they serve in distinctive ways, even within that unity of action.

Furthermore, the Spirit is as holy as the Father. He is as gracious as the Son. He is as powerful as the Father, as merciful as the Son. He is as sovereign as the Father. He is as loving as the Son. He is to be worshiped as fully as the Father, as fully as the Son.

Thomas Goodwin the Puritan said, “Our worship is sometimes with the Father, sometimes with the Son, and sometimes with the Holy Spirit. Sometimes the believer’s heart is drawn out to consider the Father’s love in choosing, and then sometimes the love of the Son in redeeming, and then sometimes the love of the Holy Spirit that searches the deep things of God and reveals them to us.” And then Goodwin says, “We should never be satisfied till all three Persons lie level in us,” – it’s a great way to express it – “that they have equal place, equal weight, and lie level in us.” And then he goes on to say, “And we sit there in the midst of them while they all manifest Their love to us.” Magnificent statement.

“We live” – according to 2 Corinthians 13:14 – “in the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the fellowship of the Spirit.” We are engulfed in divine love, divine grace, divine fellowship. We are literally living our lives in the presence of, in the fullness of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. We’ve seen that in some of our earlier studies.

Sanctification means being filled with the fullness of God. It means being filled with the fullness of Christ so that you’re like Him. It means being filled with the fullness of the Holy Spirit. It’s time for us, I think, to worship the Spirit in the way that He deserves to be worshiped. Where are the sermons on the Holy Spirit? Where are the books on the Holy Spirit? Where are the songs of praise to the Holy Spirit? Somehow He gets left out much more than is right.

In fact, over the last number of years the church as focused strongly on defending the character of

God and the nature of God, because theological liberalism has assaulted God, and the church has risen to defend God. And also in that same time period, Christ and the gospel has been under attack, and so the church has amassed its forces and its power to defend the truth concerning the Son of God. There have been almost endless tomes written on God the Father and God the Son; but during that period of time there has been very little substantial thinking and writing and defending the Holy Spirit. Conferences abound and books abound on the Son and the work of the Son, and rightly so; and occasionally even on the Father, rarely on the Holy Spirit.

The whole evangelical church seems to be marshalled to defend the Father and the Son, but to let assaults on the Holy Spirit go without any opposition. We have answered bad theology on the Father and answered it well. We've answered bad theology on the Son and answered it well. We have not answered bad theology on the Spirit well. In fact, there hasn't really been a significant book defending biblically the doctrine of the Holy Spirit since back in the 1990s. One of the reasons that we wanted to produce the book *Biblical Theology* was because there is a very, very outstanding section in that book on the Holy Spirit.

Why has the Holy Spirit been diminished? Well, I think there may be some practical reasons why that has happened, and I need to let you know what they are just as warning. We have a very, very extensive movement in the church, the professing church, called "pragmatism," pragmatism, seeker kind of friendly churches. It's an old term that was used last couple of decades. Pragmatism basically says that the church grows by virtue of its strategies, it grows by virtue of its plans, its designs, its devices, its innovations, its techniques.

Christian book that has outsold all other Christian books. The author simply says, "If I know the felt need of a person I can lead anybody to Christ." Really? That's a lot of power. That's a lot of power. You have a technique. If you know something about that person and you have the technique, can lead anybody to Christ.

That kind of pragmatism has no need for the Holy Spirit, and that's why with the burgeoning and exploding of pragmatic forms of Christianity that are built around techniques and methodologies, this is a kind of virtual denial of the sovereignty of God, a virtual accessing to Arminianism, if you will. There really is a very, very minor role for the Holy Spirit to play. It's almost as if He's not necessary; we can get it done because we have a strategy.

And then there are the rock star churches designed to appeal to worldly tastes, and worldly tastes particularly of non-Christians, and yet at the same time to keep Christians connected to the worst features of the culture. They are no less man-centered than the seeker kind of churches, even if they get the gospel right. But they also don't really need the Holy Spirit. They think entertainment will do the job. Entertainment will draw people in, and they'll feel good; and out of the "feel good" kind of thing, they'll open their minds to Jesus.

Where you have a dominant pragmatism such as is manifested in these kinds of churches, you have disinterest in the Holy Spirit. All market-driven pragmatic approaches to the Christian gospel and the spread of the truth by their own nature aren't dependent on the Holy Spirit. Consequently, those kinds of ministries have little interest in the Holy Spirit, little interest in prayer.

And then, of course, on top of that there is the very ubiquitous and fast-growing movement around

the world that we call the charismatic movement. The charismatic movement, because it will not define the person and work of the Holy Spirit accurately and biblically, allows for anything and everything to be assigned to the Holy Spirit, allows for anything and everything to be attributed to the Holy Spirit. Every imaginable kind of behavior – every impression, every experience, every subjective feeling, every supposed vision, every supposed conversation with God, appearance of Christ, trip to heaven, you name it – whatever it is, it all gets attributed to the Holy Spirit. It's kind of a third column in Christianity. And it has largely become the enemy of the Holy Spirit because it allows things to be attributed to the Holy Spirit, which He would have nothing to do with. He is dishonored greatly. It is not loving the Holy Spirit to attribute things to Him that He would have nothing to do with. It is not worship to Him to credit Him for things that He would never be a part of. It does not honor or glorify Him at all.

There are in the world now about half a billion people who identify themselves as charismatics, half a billion people. And ubiquitous in this movement is abuse of the Holy Spirit. It's not to say that none of them give some honor to the Holy Spirit; it is to say by virtue of the movement itself, it allows for everything to be attributed to Him. The Bible warns us not to resist the Holy Spirit. It warns us not to grieve the Holy Spirit. It warns us not to resist the Holy Spirit. But blaspheming the Holy Spirit is the worst. And anytime you attribute something to the Holy Spirit that isn't true of Him that's a kind of blasphemy.

Just an illustration: a book has been circulating for awhile called *Heaven is for Real*. Made a movie out of it. In that book, supposedly a little boy goes to heaven, comes back and gives us a revelation of the Holy Spirit. This is what it says: "The Holy Spirit is a blue transparent ghost you can see through, who shoots down power shots from heaven." Goes on to say, "Jesus is a short person, but He lacks in stature He makes up for in power." Five million of those sold in nine months.

There is a biblical view of the Holy Spirit and of Christ; we don't need the view that comes out of some experience imposed, I think, by the parents of some poor little kid. That is the kind of thing that the evangelical community swallows up in the millions, all of it dishonoring to the Holy Spirit. We would think that the Holy Spirit is busy giving vision, revelations, speaking in tongues, prophecies, miracles, all kinds of strange experiences, bizarre experiences.

You know, in Matthew chapter 12, when the leaders of Israel said about Jesus, "You do what You do by the power of Satan," He said, "You blaspheme the Spirit." They blasphemed the Spirit by attributing to Satan the works of Christ. I think that's been reversed in the charismatic movement, and they blaspheme the Spirit by attributing the works of Satan to Christ.

They attributed the works of Christ to Satan in Jesus' day, now they attribute the works of Satan to the Holy Spirit, or to the Spirit of Christ. And what has made this so challenging for the church is because these folks have demanded acceptance. They have demanded acceptance for a myriad of unbiblical ideas. Their books dominate Christian book stores, they dominate Christian media. They demand to be accepted, that their deceptions and delusions and confusions be accepted. And if we don't accept them we are the divisive ones, we are disrupting the unity of the church. That then pushes people back. People don't want to be accused of being divisive.

Through the years I have been accused of being divisive, and people who teach the truth, as I do. I'm not the only one, but it seems like it has come to me. First of all, there are some people, I suppose, who disagree with my view of God, but not a lot. There are more who disagree with my

view of the lordship of Christ, that's for sure. But the greatest amount of hostility that comes back at me is over the view of the Holy Spirit, because there is this massive movement that wants to attribute to the Holy Spirit anything that anybody wants to. People are less eager to do that with the Father, and less eager to do that with the Son. But they think the Holy Spirit is not threatening. They think they can say anything about Him and it's okay. And what they have done is the Holy Spirit has become their golden calf. They have created an idol with the name of God that is not God. That caused God to slaughter thousands of people in the wilderness.

That doesn't go unpunished; that's taking His name in vain. This is cultivated, emotion-driven, superficial, carnal stimulation, falsely called "worship." It's polluted the biblical doctrines of prayer, faith, contentment, humility, attack the sovereignty of God, spawned all kinds of unrighteous people in positions of leadership and unrighteous behaviors. And in earlier days its proponents really would have been called heretics. But instead, they want to set the rules for what must be tolerated; and anybody who questions any of this is divisive, and even accused of blaspheming the Spirit. No group collectively has ever done more to dishonor the Holy Spirit. We have to get it right.

So how do we know when the Spirit is working? Somebody might say, "Well, people fall over backwards, or start giggling or laughing, or go into trances or hypnosis, or speak in tongues, or have convulsions, or jump up and down." How do we know? How do we know when the Holy Spirit is working?

Look back at Galatians 5, verse 22. Here's how you know. This is what you will see: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." And you will also see that "the flesh with its passions and desires" – verse 24 – "has been crucified." That's the fruit of the Spirit.

The silence must end. The honor and worship of God the eternal Spirit is our highest priority. We need to look genuinely and truly at the work that the Spirit does. We know what the New Testament says: the Spirit convicts of sin, the Spirit regenerates, the Spirit is involved in justification. First Corinthians 6:11, "You were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ by the Spirit of our God."

The Spirit adopts us, Romans 8. The Spirit takes up residence in us, same chapter. We are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ, 1 Corinthians 12. The Spirit empowers us, Ephesians 3:16. The Spirit gives us spiritual gifts, 1 Corinthians 12. The Spirit illuminates us, 1 Corinthians 2. And what we're seeing here, the Spirit produces in us fruit; and the fruit is named, it is labeled. When a person is under the full control of the Holy Spirit that person will act like Christ, okay, because it is the Spirit's work to conform us to the image of Christ.

So just to wrap up our thoughts, let's look at the role the Spirit played in the life of Christ. The Holy Spirit was Christ's inseparable companion from the womb, to the tomb, to the throne. Since the Lord in His incarnation came into the world He emptied Himself of His divine prerogatives – personal use of His divine power – voluntarily turned Himself over to the will of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. And throughout the time that He was on earth until He ascended back to the throne, it was the Spirit working through Him to do the will of God. This is how you have to understand the incarnation. The Lord Jesus did the Father's will in the power of the Holy Spirit. And when they accused Him of being satanic in Matthew 12, He said, "You blasphemed the Spirit."

Now let's think about it. Go back to the very beginning in Luke chapter 1 where the angel comes to Mary – angel Gabriel – and says, “You’ve found favor with God.” Verse 31, “You’re conceive in your womb, bear a son, call His name Jesus. He’ll be great, the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; He’ll reign over the house of Jacob, His kingdom will have no end.”

So Mary says to the angel, “How can this be? How? This is an incomprehensible miracle. You’re telling me that God the Son is going to come into my womb? How can this be?” Answer, verse 35: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.” The virgin conception was by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit's work began at the conception of the Son of God in the womb of Mary. The Holy Spirit was upon Him from then on. The Holy Spirit was on Him when He was in her womb as we know. And when He was a child, it says in Luke 2, that “He grew in wisdom and stature, and favor with God.” Wisdom, stature, and favor with God; who is doing that in Him? The Holy Spirit is doing that as He grows from an infant to a young man. By the age of twelve the Holy Spirit has grown Him into a godly young man.

At His baptism, the Holy Spirit descended on Him like a dove, demonstrating that the Spirit was on Him to empower Him. At His temptation it was the Holy Spirit who led Him into the wilderness to be tempted so that He could triumph over Satan and establish His conquering posture. It was the Holy Spirit who led Him into the wilderness to be tempted; we learned that in Mark and Matthew and Luke. It was the Holy Spirit who empowered Him in His ministry. It tells us in Luke 4 that He ministered in the power of the Spirit. Acts 10:38, “And He was anointed by the Holy Spirit and power.” That's why He could do what He did. His ministry was in the power of the Spirit.

I don't know if you ever thought of it, but His death was a work of the Holy Spirit. You ask, “He went to death, He went to death with His eyes wide open, He knew what was coming. Where did He find the power for that? How did He power through Gethsemane? “Not My will, but Yours be done.” Knowing what was about to come, how did He do that? Answer: Hebrews 9:14, “How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God?”

It was the power of the Spirit that took Him to the cross. It was the power of the Spirit that was His strength, His resolve, conceived in the womb of Mary by the Spirit, directed as a child to full godly development by the Spirit, empowered at His baptism by the Spirit, taken into temptation and out triumphantly by the Holy Spirit, empowered for ministry by the Spirit, taken to the cross by the Spirit.

Romans chapter 1, verse 4, “declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness.” Raised by the Spirit. And even after His resurrection, forty days before His ascension when He was taken up into heaven, He had given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen by the Holy Spirit. By the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles, forty days of teaching in the power of the Spirit. The Spirit was His constant companion from the womb, to the tomb, to the throne.

Look at Christ; that's what a Spirit-controlled person looks like. Nothing bizarre, nothing strange. Love to God that is perfect, obedience to God that is perfect, love to man that is perfect, compassion that is perfect – all the attributes. In fact, what you see in Jesus is love, joy, peace, patience,

kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. That's a Spirit-controlled person.

Under the complete control of the Spirit of God He lived a perfectly sinless, God-honoring life, and He showed us what a Spirit-empowered life is like. His doctrine was pure and true. His love was comprehensive in height and depth and length and breadth. His behavior was impeccable. His attitudes were perfectly righteous. His words were the very words of God. No one ever lived like Him; no one ever thought like Him; no one ever spoke like Him. That's a perfectly Spirit-controlled person.

What interests the Holy Spirit is not knocking people down, not having them do foolish, incomprehensible things. What interests the Holy Spirit is making them like Christ. That's His work. So when Paul says, "I'm in labor again until Christ is formed in you," Paul is saying, "I have to do my part to bring you the truth of God, which becomes the tool that the Holy Spirit uses to make you like the Lord."

This is an incomprehensible gift that the Lord has given us, to give us the very same Spirit He gave His Son. The difference is it's a battle for us; it wasn't for Him. We are simultaneously righteous and sinful, He was only righteous. So the problem is not the Holy Spirit. It's what? It's us, which is why you need the Word of God, you need the means of grace, you need prayer, you need the fellowship of the saints. All of these things that work together by the power of the Holy Spirit to resist the flesh.

Verse 17: "The flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, the Spirit against the flesh; they're in opposition to one another." But there's a wonderful promise here: "The Spirit is there so that you may not do the things that you please."

Paul says in Romans 7, "I do things I don't really want to do. Something in me wants to do them. There's a restraint in me; there's a battle in me." That restraint is the Holy Spirit, who is there opposing your flesh so that you don't do the things that you naturally please to do.

That is a clear illustration of a sanctified person. You don't do what pleases you, you do what pleases God. And that is Christ, perfectly pleasing God all the time in the power of the Holy Spirit. He is in us. We live by the Spirit. We are led by the Spirit. Now it's up to us: walk in the Spirit, one step after another. What an amazing reality it is to understand what God has given us in giving us Himself.

Father, we thank You for the fellowship that we have enjoyed this morning, grateful that we have each other. We all, we all contribute in so many different ways, just being together, singing together, praying together, making friendships, building relationships. We all serve one another in so many, many ways, and it's enriching. We have wonderful musicians and folks who lead us in worship, and we have teachers and folks that take care of our children, and people who are about us and teach us truth; and that's all so wonderful. But beyond all of that, we have You living in us.

This is more than we can even comprehend. You live in us by Your Spirit, even as You lived in Your own Son by Your Spirit. Lord, help us to grasp the greatness of that reality, and to live in a way that would honor the Holy Spirit. May we worship Him for who He really is, and attribute to Him those things that He truly does. And, Lord, bring an end to the nonsense of things that are blamed on Him, that are so dishonoring. Help us to honor the Spirit, and to honor Him by being filled with the fruit that He produces: love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control. In this we will truly worship Him.

We pray, Lord, this morning for some who will be with us for sure, who have never known the Spirit because they have never come to Christ and confessed Him as Lord and Savior. They've never come to You and ask You to forgive them of their sins, and save them from eternal hell. They've never come to You and repented of their sin and asked to be forgiven, and given the gift of salvation, the free gift of salvation just for asking. But I pray, Lord, that this would be that day when Your Spirit would prompt their hearts.

O Holy Spirit, move on hearts even now to convict of sin and righteousness and judgment, to convince them of the truth of Christ and the gospel. Spirit move in power to recreate them, to bring life to death, light to darkness. Bring dead sinners to life in Christ. And blessed Holy Spirit, do Your work in every life, accomplish Your purpose for Your glory we pray. Amen.

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