

Basic Training Bible Ministries

presents

Rivers of Living Water

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit Contrasted in the
Old Testament and the New Testament



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Question: How is your spiritual life?

1. Is your **life** filled by the Holy Spirit?
2. Do you sense an ever-flowing spiritual supply?
3. Are you aware of the daily guidance of the Spirit of God?
4. Are you often affected by the Spirit's disruption of your plans?
5. Is there a power at work in you that can only be attributed to the Spirit?
6. Do you have a sense of spiritual discernment in your decision-making?
7. Is your prayer life an ongoing experience of answered prayers?

I. Living Water from the Living Rock, Joh 7:37–39; 1Co 10:4

A. Introduction

The contrast between eternal life and resurrection life (Joh 10:10)

1. Is there a difference between eternal life and resurrection life?
2. Did Old Testament (O.T.) saints have eternal life? Resurrection life?
3. What are the two qualities of "*life*" of which Jesus speaks?
4. Did not the eternal life of O.T. saints depend upon the death of Jesus?
5. Does not resurrection life depend on His resurrection?
6. This new quality of life is supplied by the indwelling Spirit.

B. Analysis

1. "***On the last day, that great day of the feast***"
 - a. This was the Feast of Tabernacles (Joh 7:2), which according to Lev 23:34 lasted seven days. On the eighth day was a special Sabbath, "*a holy convocation.*" This was the last of the three mandatory feasts (Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles, Deu 16:16).
 - b. According to Dr. Edersheim (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Vol. 2, pp. 148–163), this feast, which followed the harvest, looked to the outpouring of the Spirit and the ingathering of the Gentiles. Seventy bulls were offered for the Gentile nations and one for Israel (*cf.*, Num 29:7–38).
 - c. So great was this feast that it was called "*The Feast,*" "The Holiest and Greatest" (Josephus, *Antiquities*, viii, 4.1). This was also known as "The Great Hallel" for the series of Psalms sung at this time (Psalms 113–118).
 - d. For seven days, the priest carried water in a golden urn from the Pool of Siloam to the Temple, where it was poured out at the Altar. On the last day, the priest walked around the altar seven times, while the entire "Hallel" was sung, ending with the phrases (Psa 118:22–29):

*“The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone ...
 This is the day the LORD has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it ...
 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord ...
 Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar ...
 Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.”*

- e. This was followed by the blast of trumpets, then a prolonged silence. It was during this silence that Jesus cried out.

2. “Jesus stood and cried out”

- a. The posture here is most significant. As a Teacher/Rabbi, Jesus would sit and speak to His disciples (Mat 5:1).
- b. To stand and cry out (*krazo*) is the manner of the prophet/herald/preacher.
- c. While we do not know the exact place He stood, archaeologists have recently uncovered a “podium” between the Pool of Siloam and the Temple—within sight of both, from which the entire company of people could be seen.
- d. This was a bold and provocative act by Jesus in light of the growing hostility.
- e. Yet, He is here fulfilling the prophecy of Mal 3:1, “*The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple.*” His message also interpreted the feasts’ meaning.

3. “If any man thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.”

- a. This three-fold invitation is not three conditions, but rather a flow chart:
 - 1) “*Thirsts*,” recognition of a personal spiritual need
 - 2) “*Come*,” revelation of the one and only Savior
 - 3) “*Drink*,” reception of the water of life in perpetuity (imperfect tense)
- b. Jesus, here, identifies Himself as the “*fountain of living waters*” (Jer 2:13), the only source of lasting fulfillment for the thirst of the human soul. **Have you drank of that fountain? Do you drink of it daily?**

4. “He who believes in Me”

Jesus interprets the meaning of “*drink*.” To believe in Him implies trust in Him regarding both His identity (God-man), and His work (the cross).

5. “As the Scripture has said”

- a. Prophecy is fulfilled (*cf.*, Isa 44:3; Isa 58:11) through the incarnation, perfect life, sacrificial death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- b. As we will see, while O.T. saints received eternal life (Isa 55:1), they never received what He is promising to us here.

6. “Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water”

- a. It must be noted that the continual flow coincides with perpetual drinking.

- b. While eternal life was spoken of as “*living water*” in the O.T. (Jer 2:13; see also Joh 4:10–14), what is being promised here had never before been realized.
- c. The “*rivers*” is plural, anticipating Gal 5:22–23—the fruit of the Spirit.
- d. The use of “*heart*” in ancient times is no different than it is today.

7. “*But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing ... would receive.*”

- a. “*This*” identifies “*rivers*” with the indwelling ministry of the Spirit of God.
- b. “*Would receive*” is literally “were about to receive,” and complements the “*not yet.*”
- c. It is imperative to note that the one and only condition for the reception of the indwelling Holy Spirit is faith in Jesus Christ.
- d. As we will see when we get to John 3, no one can know absolutely the working of the Spirit in the life of another. Only he who hears His voice can be sure!

8. “*For the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified*”

- a. John, looking back in hindsight, interprets the promise of Jesus.
- b. This promise anticipates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and the indwelling ministry of the Spirit throughout this present Church Age.
- c. Take careful note of the phrase “*not yet.*” It is used in Joh 7:8, Joh 7:30, Joh 7:39, and in Joh 8:20 to indicate the divine timing of the crucifixion—the foundation of all future promises (1Co 3:11).

C. Principle

- 1. Here, in the words “*not yet*” (Joh 7:39), we have a major indication of the Doctrine of Concurrence—the working of the Father’s plan, the Son’s obedience, the betrayal by Judas, and the plot of the religious leaders. More on that later.
- 2. The term “*glorified*” encompasses the cross, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus, the Rock (1Co 10:4), had yet to be struck, in fulfillment of the picture in the wilderness (Exo 17:6).

D. The Contrast of Earlier O.T. Provision

- 1. Isaiah spoke of “*drawing water from the wells of salvation,*” Isa 12:3.
- 2. Jeremiah pictured God as “*the fountain of living waters,*” Jer 2:13.
- 3. In Jer 17:7–8, the believer is pictured “*like a tree planted by the waters.*”
- 4. Yet, in none of these passages do we find the supply coming from within. It is the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit that is unique to the Church Age.

E. The Implications and Applications for Today

1. In Luk 10:24, Jesus said to the disciples, “*For I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it*” (cf., also 1Pe 1:10–12).
2. Yet, even the disciples had not yet experienced what we have been given.
3. Later, in Joh 14:16–18, Jesus amplified this promise, telling the disciples in the Upper Room that the Father would send the Spirit “... *that He may abide with you forever ... for He dwells with you and will be in you.*”
4. In O.T. times, the presence of God’s Spirit was visible in the Shekinah glory dwelling in the Tabernacle, and later, the Temple. But, we have His presence within us, to offer a never-ending supply of help, comfort, strength, wisdom, and guidance.
5. The great question is: **What difference has it made in your life?**
6. The prophets Ezekiel, Zechariah, and John all saw visions of living water flowing from the throne of God in eternity future. **The point is, if Jesus Christ is enthroned in your life, that vision should be a living reality now!** (See Eze 47:1; Zec 14:8; Rev 21:6; Rev 22:1–4.)

II. The Justification of Jesus Christ, 1Ti 3:16

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles [nations], believed on in the world, received up in glory.” 1Ti 3:16

A. Review

1. At the Feast of Tabernacles, which anticipated the ingathering of the Gentiles, Jesus promised the yet-future indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit.
2. John makes it clear that the fulfillment of this amazing promise was dependent upon Jesus being “*glorified,*” crucified, and resurrected.
3. Therefore, the promise was only good if, in fact, Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah.
4. This is why we must consider the ministry of the Holy Spirit as it relates to the life of Jesus Christ.

B. Analysis

Seven Glories of Jesus Christ

The following thoughts are found in 1Ti 3:16:

1. He is the full and final revelation of the mystery of godliness.
2. He is eternal God, incarnate in human flesh.
3. His earthly life was the justification of all O.T. promises regarding Messiah, and this by means of His dependence upon the Spirit of God.
4. He was observed intently by the angelic realm—elect and fallen.
5. He is the central theme of the Gospel preached among the nations.
6. He has been believed on in the world, throughout history.
7. He is now seated in glory at the right hand of the Father.

C. Justified by the Spirit, Why and How?

“Justified in [by] the Spirit”

1. The subject of this early song in six strophes, or stanzas, is the “*God [who] was manifested in the flesh.*”
2. The question is, why, and in what way, must a perfect God-man be justified?
3. The word “justify” is *dikaioo* (aorist, passive, indicative) which means either “to declare righteous” or “to vindicate, to prove righteous.” Here it means the second. As we will see, this can have one of two biblical applications.
4. The word translated “*in*” is instrumental, better translated “by means of.”
5. The Lord Jesus is “declared righteous” or “vindicated” by the Spirit. But how?

D. Two Ways of Justification: How Can a Sinless Man be Justified?

1. Paul and James present to us the two ways of biblical justification.
2. In Rom 4:3 and Gal 3:6, Abraham stands as the model for **justification by faith**. This means to be “declared righteous” by God, on the basis of faith alone. It is more than being called righteous, as it includes imputing to us the righteousness of Jesus Christ, thus we are “made righteous” (2Co 5:21).
3. This justification is of the unbeliever, who now enters into the realm of faith.
4. James speaks of being “*justified by works,*” and uses both Abraham and Rahab to make his point (Jam 2:23–25). Here, we are speaking of people who already are believers, whose faith—which is invisible—is made visible by their works.
5. We might contrast the two meanings as “made righteous” and “proved righteous.” The first is before God, where the second is before men.
6. That Paul had read James is evident by his statement in Rom 4:2, “*For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.*” Paul grants the premise of James, but declares it to be before men, not before God.
7. It is the second use Paul has in mind when speaking of Jesus Christ. There are at least three ways in which we may speak of Jesus’ justification (vindication):
 - a. Prophetically. The prophets declared that Messiah would be the one and only God-man, and thus would be sinless. He would in fact be called “*THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*” (Jer 23:6). This He was proved to be.
 - b. Historically. During His earthly life, the Lord Jesus was accused of many sins and crimes by the religious leaders, even to being demon-possessed (Mat 9:34; Joh 7:20). Yet, our Lord could challenge them without fear of contradiction, “*Which of you convicts Me of sin?*” (Joh 8:46).
 - c. Supernaturally. “*...declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead ...,*” Rom 1:4. By His resurrection, Jesus was proved to the whole world to be the sinless Son of God (Act 2:23–24) whom the grave could not hold.

8. In each incident above, the Holy Spirit was the enabling force. First, in the virgin birth (Luk 1:35), second in His perfect life (Luk 4:18–19), and finally in His resurrection (Rom 1:4).

E. The Author and Finisher of Faith

The new spiritual life, which Jesus has inaugurated for us (Heb 10:20), is seen in His submission to the Spirit (Luk 3:22), filling by the Spirit (Luk 4:1a), being led by the Spirit (Luk 4:1b), and finally being anointed for service by the Spirit (Luk 4:18).

F. The Implications and Applications for Today

1. By His sinless life, the Lord Jesus was “vindicated” before the eyes of the world as the promised Messiah and only Savior of mankind.
2. By His righteousness, He also justified the faith of O.T. saints who looked forward to His coming (Gen 15:6; Job 19:25–26; Isaiah 53).
3. By His dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit, He became “*the author and finisher of ... faith*” (Heb 12:2), setting the standard for the Christian way of life.
4. By the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit, every believer is enabled to live out the life of Jesus Christ on this earth (Eph 5:18; Gal 2:20; Gal 5:22–23; 1Co 13:4–8).
5. The same Spirit by which Jesus was “justified” in living a sinless life is able to enable us to be “*justified by works*” as we yield to Him living through us (Rom 6:11–14; Jam 2:14–26)

III. The Radical Transition from the Old to the New

“Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.” Mat 9:17

A. Review

1. Jesus’ sinless life was lived in dependence upon the Spirit of God.
2. In this way, He set the precedent for the Christian way of life (spirituality). The life that He displayed, “*new wine*,” had to be put into “*new wineskins*” (His Body, the Church).
3. The author of Hebrews says that Jesus inaugurated (*egkainizo*) for us “*a new and living way ... through the veil*” (Heb 10:20).
4. This “new way” involves a new law, new priesthood, and new power. All this was anticipated by Jesus’ parable of “*new wine*.”
5. Note in the passage cited above, Jesus’ desire is to preserve the old along with the new. “*I did not come to destroy the law or prophets, but to fulfill*” (Mat 5:17).

B. Analysis

New Law, New Priesthood, New Power

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” 1Co 5:17

1. **“All things have become new”**

- a. This passage is usually falsely interpreted as emphasizing a change of lifestyle, putting away “old” habits, and replacing them with “new” Christian behavior.
- b. What Paul has in mind, as shown by the extended context, is something far greater.
- c. In 2Co 3:1–3, he has argued for a new power, “*the Spirit of the living God*” at work in their lives.
- d. In 2Co 3:7–18, he has contrasted the old law of Moses with the new law of liberty.
- e. Then, in 2Co 4:1–18, he presents a new ministry, fulfilled by a new priesthood.
- f. If we compare 2Co 3:1–4:18 with the argument of Heb 7:12, we find agreement. “*For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.*”
- g. It was precisely for this reason that the charge was made against Paul, “*These who have turned the world upside down have come here too*” (Act 17:6)

2. **Five New Things in Christ**

- a. First, there is a **new covenant**.
“[God] also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter [law] but of the Spirit, for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” 2Co 3:6
- b. Then, there is a **new law**, by which the old is fulfilled.
“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you.” Joh 13:34
- c. This is far greater than,
“Love your neighbor as yourself.” Mat 22:39
- d. With these, there comes a **new priesthood**.
“You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” Heb 5:6, Heb 5:10
- e. Every believer in Jesus Christ is part of this priesthood (1Pe 2:5–9).
- f. For this priesthood there is a **new power**.
“But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord ... But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.” 2Co 3:18; 2Co 4:7

- g. Finally, there is a **new temple**.

“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” 1Co 3:16

C. Implications and Applications for Today

1. The question each of us must ask ourselves is this: “Am I living according to the new and living way, by the power of the indwelling Spirit, for which Christ died?” It may be helpful to contemplate the following: “In what ways would my life be changed if the indwelling Spirit of God had His way in my life?”
2. Every child of God has a unique gift and calling to follow (Rom 11:29; 1Co. 7:7). However, all these gifts are to work within three spheres of service:
 - a. Each of us is to serve as a priest to God (1Pe 2:5–9). This is primarily the ministry of intercession for others (1Ti 2:8; Heb 4:16).
 - b. Each of us is to be an ambassador of Christ to the lost (2Co 5:18–21). We are to be a witness of Christ by our words and lifestyle.
 - c. Each of us is also a minister to our fellow-believers (1Co 12:4–7; 1Pe 4:10).
3. These three areas of ministry define the focus of the three greatest virtues:

*“And now abide **faith, hope, and love**, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” 1Co 13:13, emphasis added*

*“Remembering without ceasing your work of **faith**, labor of **love**, and patience of **hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father.” 1Th 1:3, emphasis added*

- **Faith** is directed toward God, as we minister before His throne as **priests**.
- **Hope** is expressed toward the lost, as we fulfill our **ambassadorship**.
- **Love** is directed toward our fellow believers, in the **ministry** of our gift.

Note: The “new covenant” is mentioned during the Last Supper in the first three Gospels. John does not mention it, or the supper; rather, in John Chapters 13–17, he interprets it for us.

IV. Born of the Spirit versus Spiritual Living

“The wind [Spirit] blows [breathes] where it [He] wishes ... so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” Joh 3:8

A. Review

1. In a proper interpretation of Scripture, it is essential to distinguish between Israel and the Church. God is not done with Israel; the Church does not replace Israel.

2. The Church Age is an age of “mystery,” including new revelation and new spiritual provisions.
3. In this Age, every believer is a priest unto God, an ambassador to the world, and a minister to other believers.
4. These three spheres of ministry are fulfilled as we submit to the power of the Spirit in faith, hope, and love.
5. An Old Testament reference would be: “*Wind ... earthquake ... fire ... still small voice* [blowing] ...” 1Ki 19:11–12.

B. Analysis (with corrected translation by Dr. Randolph Yeager)

1. ***“The Spirit breathes where He wills”***
 - a. In context, Jesus is instructing Nicodemus in regard to spiritual regeneration.
 - b. As a Pharisee, Nicodemus would assume the position of salvation by works.
 - c. In contrasting physical versus spiritual birth, Jesus declares that flesh can only produce flesh (and “*the flesh profits nothing,*” but “*the Spirit ... gives life,*” Joh 6:63), and only the Spirit (Holy Spirit) can give spiritual birth (*cf.*, Joh 3:5–6).
 - d. The word for “wind,” which Jesus used in Mat 7:25 is *anemos*, but the word for Spirit is *pneuma*. *Anemos* is used 39 times and is always translated “wind,” but *pneuma* occurs 113 times and is translated “spirit” everywhere—with the exception of Rev 11:11—where it is translated “*breath.*”
 - e. Jesus’ point here is that the Spirit of God sovereignly bestows eternal life, by breathing it into the one who believes—a fact stressed seven times, in the context of Joh 3:11–18.
 - f. This “breath” is in conjunction with the Word of God, Rom 10:17.
2. ***“And you hear His voice”***
 - a. The voice (*phone*) of the Spirit speaks to every soul, through creation (Rom 1:18–23), conscience (Rom 2:14–16), and by Scripture (Rom 10:17).
 - b. This voice begins with the world-wide convicting ministry of the Spirit of God, working in conjunction with the witness of believers (Joh 15:26–27; Joh 16:7–11).
 - c. However, the Spirit does not “shout” but, as in Elijah’s day, speaks with “*a still small voice*” (1Ki 19:12). Only the humble, sensitive soul will hear and respond.
3. ***“But you do not know from whence it comes or where it is going”***
 - a. No one, at first, recognizes the source of that convicting, inner voice.
 - b. Neither can anyone anticipate where it is leading.
 - c. At the moment of conviction, the soul only knows (vaguely) that it is under condemnation and is in need of a Savior.

4. **“So is everyone who is born of the Spirit”**
 - a. The believer responds to a voice only he can hear, and responds in faith that leads to he knows not where.
 - b. This is the same as when Jesus said, “*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me*” (Joh 10:27).
 - c. Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus, “the teacher of Israel” (Joh 3:10), in terms with which he should have been familiar. In the promise of the New Covenant (Jer 31:31–34; Eze 36:25–27), the figures of “*clean water,*” “*My Spirit,*” and “*a new heart and ... a new spirit*” are used.
 - d. The “*water*” here (Joh 3:5) is definitely **not** baptism! It refers to that which is essential to new birth—the cleansing and regenerating work of the Spirit through God’s Word (Tit 3:5; Eph 5:26).

5. **No Soul is Excluded from God’s Grace**
 - a. God loves every soul which He has created, Joh 3:16.
 - b. Jesus Christ died for every soul, 1Ti 2:6.
 - c. The Holy Spirit convicts every soul of sin, righteousness, and judgment, Joh 16:7–11.
 - d. God desires salvation for every soul, 1Ti 2:4.
 - e. God is not willing that any should perish, 2Pe 3:9.
 - f. The Gospel is to be preached to all men, Mar 16:15; Rom 1:14.
 - g. Every soul is commanded to repent of unbelief and trust in Christ, Act 17:30.

6. **Five Pictures/Figures of the Holy Spirit**
 - a. Breath: To impart life and purpose (*pneo*—to breathe, *cf.*, Gen 2:7; Rom 10:17)
 - b. Water: To cleanse and refresh (Joh 7:37, with Eze 36:25, Eze 36:27, and Joh 13:10)
 - c. Fire: To refine and empower (Act 2:3, note “*tongues,*” as related to the operation of the Spirit in each one of them, Act 2:4). Connect “*divided*” with “*each.*”
 - d. Oil: To anoint and sanctify, Exo 28:41; 1Sa 16:3, 1Sa 16:12 (*chrisma*, anointing oil, 1Jo 2:20)
 - e. Helper: To aid and comfort, Psa 54:4 (*parakletos*, “advocate, coach, helper,” Joh 14:16; Heb 13:6)
 - f. Clothing: To cover and protect, Isa 61:10 (Luk 24:49, *enduo*, “to be clothed”). Compare with Eph 4:22–24.

7. **Six Salvation Works of the Spirit**

Question:
How is your relationship to God so much greater than the one that David had with God?

*“Do not cast me away from Your presence ...
take not Your Spirit from me.” Psa 51:11*

*“Another helper that He may abide with you forever ...
He dwells with you and will be in you ...”
Joh 14:16–17 (this, in light of Joh 13:36–14:1)*

- a. Conviction, Joh 16:7–11 (pre-salvation)
- b. Baptism, 1Co 12:13
- c. Regeneration, Joh 3:3, Joh 3:7; Tit 3:5; 2Co 5:17
- d. Indwelling, Joh 7:37; Joh 14:17; Rom 8:9–11; 1Co 6:19
- e. Gifting, 1Co 12:7; 1Co 7:7
- f. Sealing, 2Co 1:22; Eph 1:13–14; Eph 4:30

Note: David, and all O.T. believers, had only the first and third of the above.

8. Six Commands for Spiritual Living

- a. Do not grieve the Spirit, Eph 4:30.
- b. Do not quench the Spirit, 1Th 5:19.
- c. Walk by means of the Spirit, Gal 5:16, Gal 5:25.
- d. Be filled by means of the Spirit, Eph 5:18.
- e. Love one another, Joh 13:34–35; Rom 13:9; 1Co 13:4–8.
- f. **Keep it between you and God**, Mat 6:3–4, Mat 6:6, Mat 6:18. The point here is that truly spiritual people recognize that they have no need to boast, perform, or make any attempt to be recognized. True honor comes from God (1Sa 2:30). Human renown or reputation is of no value on the eternal scale.

9. Implications and Applications for Today

If anything, the life of the New Testament believer should be marked by three things: *“a spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind”* (2Ti 1:7).

- a. Jesus said, *“So is everyone who is born of the Spirit”* (Joh 3:8b). He begins the verse talking about the Spirit, but ends speaking of the believer.
- b. The first point is that there should be no difference between the working of the Spirit and the walk of the child of God.
- c. The miraculous working of the Spirit in regeneration continues on into the everyday life of the Christian.
- d. The little word *“so”* is critical, drawing a parallel, like an equal sign (=). The miracle of regeneration binds the Spirit and the believer from that point forevermore (Joh 14:16).
- e. Further, the word *“is”* leaves no room for doubt. It includes *“everyone who is born of the Spirit,”* without exception.
- f. So, if Jesus defines the spiritual life as something no one else can evaluate, not knowing *“where it comes from or where it is going,”* how have we

come to think that we can evaluate what the Spirit is doing in any other believer's life? Did not Paul say, "*he who is spiritual ... is rightly judged by no one*"? (1Co 2:15).

- g. While many today are pushing the idea that "true Christians" will have obvious and visible fruit, in Mat 7:21–23, those who have "many wonderful works" in Jesus name are shown to be unregenerate and unsaved. Again, this refers to #6 above.

V. The Spirit of Life vs. the Law of Death, Rom 8:1–4; 2Co 3:7–15

*"... that we should serve in the **newness** of the Spirit and not in the **oldness** of the letter ..."* Rom 7:6, emphasis added

A. Review

1. The work of the Holy Spirit in bringing about salvation/regeneration is only the beginning of His purpose (consider the six works listed before).
2. Jesus' phrase "*you cannot tell ... where it is going*" (Joh 3:8) indicates the ongoing ministries of the Spirit leading to maturity and usefulness.
3. The great challenge of Christian development is "pressing on" (Phi 3:14) versus "turning back" (Heb 10:38). This requires a forsaking of the "*weak and beggarly*" elements of the flesh (Gal 4:9), and a turning to the "powerful and rich" provisions given to us.

B. Analysis

A Doctrinal Outline of Romans

This is important in order to keep Paul's teachings in Romans 8 in their context:

1. Condemnation, Romans 1–3 (key verse is Rom 3:23)
2. Justification, Romans 4–5 (key verses are Rom 4:3 and Rom 4:22–24, with Rom 5:1).
3. Sanctification, Romans 6–8 (key verses are Rom 6:4–6, Rom 6:11–14 and Rom 8:1–4).
4. Dispensation, Romans 9–11 (key verse is Rom 11:25). This section is crucial in light of Paul's assurance in Rom 8:31–39. The obvious question would arise, "What about Israel?" In these chapters, Paul shows that the promises of God to Israel will be fulfilled.
5. Transformation, Romans 12–16 (key verses are Rom 12:1–2, which resumes the thought of Rom 6:4, Rom 6:11–14, and also that of Rom 8:28–30). All believers will ultimately be "*conformed to the image of His Son,*" but that process begins, in time, at salvation.

C. The Contrasts between New and Old, Rom 8:1–4

1. It is crucial to remember that the eighth chapter of Romans belongs to the section of the epistle dealing with sanctification/spiritual growth (Romans 6–8).

2. In this section, Paul deals with the question, “What comes after salvation?” It deals with the idea of “the Cross to the Crown,” beginning in Rom 6:1 with the implications of justification, and ends with the expectation of glory.
3. One of the greatest challenges facing every new Christian is whether they will be able to let go of the “old” ways of law in order to embrace the “new” way of the Spirit.

D. “There is no condemnation ... to those ... in Christ.”

Here is the contrast between the “old” **condemnation** vs. “new” **justification**. The rest of the verse goes on to apply this positional truth to Christian conduct.

E. “Who walk not according to the flesh ... but ... the Spirit”

Now we see the implications of our salvation—the departure from living under the **dominion of the flesh** (slavery) to the liberating life of **power in the Spirit**.

F. “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ ... the law of sin and death.”

The contrast now is between the law of death vs. the law of life, administered in us by the indwelling Spirit.

Note: The phrase, “*has made [set] me free*” is *eleutheroo*, (aorist, active, indicative), which speaks of an accomplished work of liberation (justification/salvation), restoring to us both the privilege and responsibility of choosing, “What do I do with my freedom?”

G. “For what the law could not do [weakness] ... God did [power] ...”

Now the contrast is between that which is inherently weak vs. God’s inherent power. The word-play here is difficult for us to catch. It is between “unable” (*adunatos*, literally “impossible, no-power) and “judged” (*katakrino*, “to execute judgment”). Where the law was powerless (weak) God is powerful (mighty).

H. “That ... righteousness ... might be fulfilled in us ... walk not after the flesh”

Here the **righteousness** embodied in the law is fulfilled in **sinner**s, who choose to walk, not after the flesh, but in the power of the Spirit.

Principle: The choice facing the believer is this: Will my life reflect ...

1. Condemnation or justification?
2. Slavery or freedom?
3. Death or life?
4. Unrighteousness or righteousness?

I. Will We Choose Temporal or Eternal Glory? (2Co 3:7–18)

1. Here, we have the same contrasts, some stated, others implied: death vs. life, law vs. grace, weak vs. powerful, flesh vs. Spirit, slavery vs. liberty, condemnation vs. justification.
2. Now, a new contrast is introduced, that which is “*passing away*” (2Co 3:7, 2Co 3:11, 2Co 3:13) vs. that which “*remains*” (2Co 3:11).

3. The incident of Moses' veil is used to illustrate the unwillingness of Israel to recognize the temporary (fading glory) of the Law.
4. That there was considerable glory attached to the Old Covenant is clear:

“... *Who are Israelites, to whom pertains the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the services of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers [Patriarchs], and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came ...*” Rom 9:4–5

5. If we choose Christ (the new wine), we preserve all the best of this heritage (old wine), but we contain it within the “*new wineskins*” of the Church (Mat 9:16–17).
6. By keeping our focus on Christ, through His Word, we are in a process of transformation, “*from glory*” (that of the old) “*to glory*” (that of Christ), by means of the Spirit of God.

J. The Repetitious Nature of Reversion

“Again” is a favorite word of little children. In response to anything that delights them, they will say, “Again!” But see how often it is used of reversion (emphasis added):

1. “*For you did not receive the spirit of bondage [the Law] **again** to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption ...*” Rom 8:15 (*cf.*, 2Ti 1:7 on fear).
2. “*For if I build **again** those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor,*” Gal 2:18.
3. “*... how is it that you turn **again** to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire **again** to be in bondage?*” Gal 4:9.
4. “*... do not be entangled **again** with a yoke of bondage ...*” Gal 5:1.
5. “*You have need that one teach you **again** the first oracles of the Son of God,*” Heb 5:12.
6. “*... since they crucify **again** for themselves the Son of God ...*” Heb 6:6.

K. Implications and Applications for Today

1. The greatest danger facing the believer is that of turning back (reversion) to the “*weak and beggarly elements*” of the Law (Gal 4:9).
2. In practical terms, this means turning from liberty in Christ to slavery of some law, rule, or regulation, “*Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle*” (Col 2:21).
3. This “turning back” (Heb 10:38) or “*backsliding*” (Jer 31:22; Hos 4:16) brings the loss of assurance, stunted growth, and inner turmoil (Gal 5:1–5; Eph 4:17–19).

L. The Seven Steps of Spiritual Growth, 2Pe 1:5–7

These steps assume a foundation of faith on which to build. The word “*add*” means to “supply in abundance, to richly provide.” Faith is all you need in order to do this.

1. Virtue, the power (*arête*) that comes from yielding to the Spirit (2Pe 1:3–4)
2. Knowledge, the product of ongoing study, application of God’s Word

3. Self-control, “inner-control,” authority of God’s Word rules the inner life
4. Perseverance, day-by-day continuance of growth in face of all obstacles
5. Godliness, conformity to Jesus Christ (1Ti 3:16)
6. Brotherly love, fulfillment of Joh 13:34, love of fellow-believers
7. Love, the love of Christ toward all the lost (2Co 5:14–21)

M. The Seven Steps of Reversion, Eph 4:17–19

1. Desire to live like the world, “*walk as ... Gentiles*” (walk in the flesh)
2. Apathy to God’s Word, “*futility of ... mind*” (quenching the Spirit)
3. Willing blindness, “*understanding darkened*,” (walk in darkness)
4. Alienation from God, used of Galatian believers in Gal 5:4
5. Hardening of the heart, “*blindness*” here is *porosis*, “progressive hardening”
6. Self-betrayal, “*given themselves*,” *paradidomi*, used of Judas (Joh 20:21)
7. Insatiability, “*greediness*,” *pleonexia*, “covetousness” (*cf.*, Luk 12:15)

N. The Seven Steps of Spiritual Recovery, Jam 4:5–10

1. Conviction by the Spirit, Jam 4:5–6
2. Submission, surrender to God, Jam 4:7
3. Resistance of the devil, Jam 4:7 b
4. Drawing near to God, Jam 4:8 (Bible study, prayer, fellowship with believers)
5. Cleansing, purifying, Jam 4:8b (note this is both actions and motives)
6. Repentance, renewal of the mind, Jam 4:9 (see faithlessness as God sees it)
7. Be humbled, Jam 4:10 (go back to Jam 4:6, “[God] *gives grace to the humble.*”)

Principle: If we stay on the upward path, we will never know the shame of having taken the downward path, or the need for the painful and difficult path of recovery. Rather, we will experience the ever-new transformation of resurrection life!

VI. The Spirit of Transformation (Sanctification), 2Co 3:1–6, 2Co 3:16–18

*“You are an epistle of Christ ... written not with ink
but by the Spirit of the living God ...” 2Co 3:3*

A. Analysis

1. Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ is born again by the Spirit of God (Tit 3:4–5)—a living testimony to the truth of the Gospel message of the Bible.
2. The life of each believer is an unfolding story, which will be recorded for all eternity. In it, the power of faith and the poverty of its lack are recorded. All the blessings of obedience will be proven as a testimony to the faithfulness of God. As well, all the loss of disobedience will be clearly manifested.
3. As spiritual growth occurs, the life of the Christian begins to reflect the truths of Scripture in decisions, words, and actions.

4. One of the chief evidences of this miracle is that the quest for “self-sufficiency” gives way to dependence on the all-sufficiency of the indwelling Spirit (2Co 3:4–6).
5. The Stoics loved the idea of being “self-sufficient.” Paul often encountered this in his association with many Roman soldiers. Here, he takes their concept and re-defines it spiritually as coming from faith-dependency on God.

*“Now the Lord is the Spirit ... [we] are being transformed
into the same image from glory to glory,
just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2Co 3:17–18*

6. The interim work of the Spirit, between justification (the cross) and glorification (the crown) is that of transformation.
7. The word “transformed” is *metamorphoo*, and speaks of change which begins within, and works outward, until complete change is affected.
8. The “image” is that of Jesus Christ, who is “*the image of the invisible God*” (Col 1:15 and Heb 1:3). We are being transformed into His very likeness—not in appearance, but in nature and character (2Pe 1:4).
9. It is critical to note that this process takes place while we “[behold] *as in a mirror the glory of the Lord,*” the Word of God being that mirror. This thought is stressed again in 2Co 3:18, “*while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen,*” which are spiritual and eternal (2Co 4:18).
10. This process necessarily involves failure, conviction, correction, and persistence, which is why Paul learned to rejoice in his weaknesses, for out of them came growth leading to spiritual power (see 2Co 12:9–10).

B. Implications and Applications for Today

1. Spiritual transformation begins with regeneration, by which one becomes a “*new creature*” (new spiritual species) in Christ (2Co 5:17; Tit 3:4–5).
2. The process is accelerated as we submit to the instruction of the Spirit regarding the Word of God (Eph 1:17–20), leading to resurrection power.
3. This inner empowerment leads to increasing comprehension of the abiding nature of Christ indwelling us, conforming us to His character and conduct.
4. The culmination is the outflow of the love of Christ (Joh 13:34–35; Gal 5:22–23).

VII. The Spirit of Power for Facing Trials and Persecutions, Phi 1:12, Phi 1:19–30; Phi 4:11–13

A. Introduction

1. Samson is an example of extreme power from the Spirit of God in the O.T.
2. What lessons can be gained from Samson about the superiority of the power given to N.T. believers? See Jdg 16:13–22.

3. Jesus said to the disciples, “*You shall receive **power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you*” (Act 1:8, emphasis added). What is the manifestation of that power?

Question: How can we face persecution with boldness and confidence?

B. Analysis

1. “***But I want you to know, brethren***”
 - a. The verb “*want*” is *boulomai* and expresses a strong personal desire resulting from Paul’s own imprisonment.
 - b. Paul has important lessons to pass on from his own personal experiences.
 - c. These lessons are vital to believers who are suffering or about to experience persecution (*cf.*, Phi 1:29–30).
2. “***The things that have happened to me***”
 - a. Beginning with Paul’s arrest in Jerusalem (Acts 21), there were attempts on his life (Act 23:12ff), and he spent two years in Caesarea (Act 24:27).
 - b. This was followed by the shipwreck on Malta (Acts 27), and final arrival and imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28).
 - c. All of these trials occurred after the roster of his sufferings recorded in 2Co 11:23–33.
3. “***Have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel***”
 - a. The word translated “*actually*” is *mallon*, and more accurately means “much more” or “contrary to what one would expect.”
 - b. “*Furtherance*” is a military term (*prokopto*), which speaks of “blazing a trail” or “leading the advance.”
 - c. Paul’s experience and example have “blazed a trail” for all who come after.

Point: Paul is confirming the truth of what he wrote in Rom 8:28–39!

*“And we know that all things work together for good
to those who love God ...” Rom 8:28*

“If God is for us, who can be against us?” Rom 8:31

*“In all these things we are more than conquerors
through Him ...” Rom 8:37*

C. Lessons From Paul’s Persecution, Phi 1:19–30

1. It is precisely in times of affliction that the “*supply of the Spirit*” comes, Phi 1:19.
2. God delivers by prayer, endurance, boldness, and effective witness, Phi 1:20.

3. Every believer should see death as gain, and life as time to serve Him, Phi 1:21–26.
4. The only worthy course in persecution is for believers to display unity in waging effective spiritual combat for the truth of the Gospel of Christ, Phi 1:27–28.
5. It is imperative for believers to see persecution as a gift God gives to those who take their faith in Jesus Christ seriously (Phi 1:29–30, *cf.*, Act 5:41–42).

D. The Four Phases of Skill Development

1. **The unconsciously incompetent.** (We don't know that we don't know.) This is when one does not know what one is incapable of. This is the state of the **arrogant**.
2. **The consciously incompetent.** (We know that we don't know.) Here, we are very aware of our inadequacy, and conscious of the need for remedial action. This is the state of the **humble**.
3. **The consciously competent.** (With focus and effort, we both know and can do.) Having taken remedial steps of training, we can now implement given skills, as long as we concentrate fully. This is the state of the **capable**.
4. **The unconsciously competent.** (When we know and do without thought or effort.) This is the state of the **skillful**.

E Paul's Training as a Spiritual Warrior

1. **The "learning" phase,** Phi 4:11 (boot camp). The word "*learned*" speaks of the results of a process. Paul had to learn his need before he could claim the supply of God's grace (see 2Co 12:9–10)—**from unconscious to conscious incompetence**. We cannot learn any skill without first being shown how great our lack is. Thus, all failures in life can be turned to gold if we learn from them. Our Teacher is the Spirit.
2. **The "know how" phase,** Phi 4:12 (advanced training). Here, we go **from conscious incompetence to conscious competence**. We have developed "know how" (scriptural knowledge and its application), but must consciously concentrate on implementing it in daily life.
3. **The "can do" phase,** Phi 4:13 (skillful confidence or **unconsciously competent**). This is what the Army Rangers, Navy Seals, and Marine Recon work to develop. This is where training takes over; reaction is swift, instinctive, and automatic.
4. In the above three points, Paul essentially teaches us that preparing for persecution is the end result of a prolonged time of spiritual training. Consider again 2Co 11:23–33 as Paul's training program before glibly quoting Phi 4:13!

F. Individuality of Spiritual Power

1. Spiritual power never manifests itself exactly the same in any two persons.
2. A comparison of Samson and David, or Moses and Elijah, shows that each was a man of great power. Yet, each displayed that power in unique ways.
3. They were men of power, but were also men of great weaknesses and failures.

4. Paul teaches us that the secret to sustained spiritual power is found through the humility and dependence we learn through weakness (2Co 12:9–10).

G. Implications and Applications

1. Each and every believer is called to a life of spiritual power and greatness.
2. God has “handcrafted” each of us, and orchestrates the circumstances of our lives, so as to provide opportunity to learn, grow strong, and prevail.
3. Never compare yourself to others (2Co 10:12). Live victoriously in your own life! The Spirit of God is manifested differently in each life of faith (1Co 12:7).

VIII. The Spirit of God and Prayer, Rom 8:26–28

“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses ... because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”

A. Illustration

In Luk 18:1–8, Jesus tells the story of the persistent widow and the unjust king with one primary point: *“that men always ought to pray and not lose heart.”* What Paul is teaching here in Romans 8 explains much of what is behind Jesus’ lesson.

Never forget that God alone controls three things in answering our prayers: the timing of the answer, the means of fulfillment, and the end result of the prayer.

B. Analysis

1. At what point do we most identify and express our weakness and inability? It is when we have no place to turn but to prayer.
2. Our dilemmas are then compounded even more, for we so often do not even know how we should pray.
3. In all my years in ministry, the two areas of Christian living that have drawn the most questions from students are those of prayer and guidance.

C. “The Spirit also helps in our weaknesses”

1. The word “helps” is critical to our understanding of how the Spirit works. It is *sunantilambano*, meaning “to take the other end with us” (Yeager, *The Renaissance New Testament*, Vol. 11, p. 555). The Holy Spirit helps us in carrying the burden of our weaknesses in prayer.
2. Our primary “weakness” is that *“we do not know what we should pray for as we ought.”* We are ignorant of God’s eternal plan and perfect will for us.
3. But “on the other end” of the prayer-burden, the Holy Spirit knows precisely what God is working to accomplish in our circumstances.

D. “But the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us”

1. The “*but*” here is strongly adversative. In strong contrast to our weakness, the Spirit has no such weakness.
2. The word for “*makes intercession*” is a triple-compound verb, which occurs only here in the N.T. The verb in essence means “to strike the mark” and is translated “*obtain*” in 2Ti 2:10 and Heb 11:35, and “*to attain*” in Luk 20:35.
3. The prepositions compounding the verb suggest entering into our difficulty so as to “hit the mark” on our behalf. The Spirit’s intercession always hits the bulls-eye of God’s perfect will. He is like an archery coach who places His hands on ours, and guides us in shooting the arrow in order to hit the mark. It is worth remembering that the word for sin (*hamartia*) means to “miss the mark.”
4. The “inaudible groanings” imply both the Spirit’s deep interest in our cause, and the spiritual plane of communication between the Spirit and the Father.
5. This is what Paul means in 1Co 14:15 when he says, “*I will pray with the spirit [Spirit], and I will also pray with understanding.*” We should neither pray in ignorance, nor in selfishness (Jam 4:3).

E. “*He that searches the hearts knows ... the mind of the Spirit*”

1. Both the Father and the Spirit are interested and involved in our cause.
2. The Father knows “the heart” of the prayer, both from the standpoint of desire and also that of the best possible response.
3. The “*mind of the Spirit*” is not only there to help us, but also to fulfill God’s will.

“The divine omniscience of the Holy Spirit is the safeguard that stands between the Christian and the tragic results of his own errant prayers.” (Yeager, Vol. 11, p. 557).

“He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” Rom 8:27

4. Our ignorance is overcome by the gracious omniscience of the Spirit. It is He who “*searches all things, yes, the deep things of God*” (1Co 2:10).
5. In this, He is joined by the Lord Jesus, who is seated at the right hand of the Father (Rom 8:34, see also Heb 7:25).
6. It is most important to note that the Spirit intercedes as we pray. If we do not pray, He has nothing to work with. It is a cooperative effort—He is our Helper.

F. “*And we know that all things work together for good*”

In Plato’s *The Republic*, Book X, p. 613, he writes, “[For the just man] *all things will in the end work together for good to him in life and death ...*” Some suggest that Paul sanctified this line from Plato, bringing it into Scripture.

1. The word “*we know*” (one word in the Greek) is in the emphatic position, speaking of those who are “*led by the Spirit*” (Rom 8:14) and share Christ’s sufferings (Rom 8:17).

2. Such believers are “*eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our bodies*” (Rom 8:23), and are “*eagerly wait[ing] for it with perseverance*” (Rom 8:25).
3. It is these, who “*love God*” and are “*called according to His purpose,*” who are “*in the know*” (*i.e.*, have the assurance) that God works through all conditions and events to bring about our eternal good.
4. This does not mean God does not work on behalf of disobedient believers; but there, He works through disciplinary action, and such believers usually will not have the confident assurance that all is well—in spite of circumstances.

G. Implications and Applications for Today

1. Because of the truths revealed in this passage, Paul is able to tell us to “rejoice in all things” (Phi 4:4; 1Th 5:16), simply because “all things work for our good,” in God’s overruling plan. Again, this is written to the obedient believer.
2. It is also the grounds for his command to “give thanks in all things” (1Th 5:18), because we trust our heavenly Father to orchestrate our circumstances.
3. Finally, James tells us to “*count it all joy when [we] fall into various trials*” (Jam 1:2) on this same basis, because when we endure them in faith (Jam 1:12), we will receive the crown of life.
4. The Christian who lives in God’s Word and walks in the light has great confidence and assurance in the face of life’s uncertainties and difficulties.
5. The faithful believer is able to pray with confidence, knowing, that though the prayer may be (likely, will be) answered in ways other than we may hope or think, it will surely be answered in the way that pleases God, glorifies Him, and fulfills His eternal purpose.

H. Illustration

When I was in Nigeria in 1989, our team was asked to visit a remote village up on a mountain. We climbed the trail and met with the people under a huge spreading tree in the middle of the village. After the Bible teaching, we were asked to visit a poor, sick, elderly woman. I thought they wanted us to pray for her, but when we entered the dim shack in which she was laying, the chief said she wanted us to hear her story. She said she was listening while we were teaching and wanted us to know that for forty years she had been praying for God to bring someone to her village to tell them how to know and please Him. She said, “*Now I can die happy, because we have heard what Jesus has done for us.*”

IX. Epilogue: The Holy Spirit and Divine Guidance

*“However, when He, the Spirit of truth has come,
He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own,
but whatever He hears He will speak;
and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take
of what is mine and declare it to you.” Joh 16:13–14*

A. Introductory Principles

1. It is imperative to distinguish between the interpretation and the application of any passage.
2. Every passage has **one** interpretation—but limitless applications.
3. The interpretation deals with the facts or truths stated within the context. It tells us who is speaking, who is receiving, and what is clearly stated.
4. The application seeks to take the truth conveyed and see how it may apply to us in any given circumstance or situation.
5. This passage, then, is Jesus addressing the disciples, and promising them the guidance of the Holy Spirit—in the sense of revelation, which they would record in the New Testament manuscripts. This was often a joint-effort (see the “we” references in Joh 21:24; Rom 1:5; 1Jo 1:2–4 for examples).
6. *“The Holy Spirit would come to complete their theological education later when they were more capable of learning (see Joh 16:12),”* (Dr. Randolph Yeager, *The Renaissance New Testament*, Vol. 8, p. 179, on Joh 16:13).
7. The truth of the guidance of the Spirit, however, applies to all believers. The great emphasis here is that the Spirit’s guidance is always according to the truth, and therefore, according to revealed Scripture.

B. Divine Guidance and Maturity

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the [mature] sons of God.” Rom 8:14

C. Analysis

1. ***“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God”***
 - a. This statement is supporting the spiritual obligation declared in Rom 8:12.
 - b. The phrase “*as many as*” indicates that not all believers yield to the Spirit.
 - c. The word “*led*” is *ago*, a present, passive, indicative, which speaks of the habitual yielding (*cf.*, Rom 6:11–23) to the guidance of the Spirit of God.
 - d. While all believers are “*children*” (*tekna*) of God (Joh 1:12–13; 2Pe 1:4), only those in the habit of being so guided by the Spirit are “*mature sons*” (*huios*).
2. ***“These are the [mature] sons of God”***
 - a. This passage is critical, in that it gives us both a definition and a test of spiritual maturity and, in fact, spirituality itself.
 - b. Spiritually mature believers are in the habit of being led by the Spirit of God.
 - c. Going back to earlier definitions, they are unconsciously competent in being led, guided, and shepherded by the Spirit of God. It is my experience that most of God’s guidance is not obvious to us at the time. Only afterward do we look back and say, “*being on the way, the LORD led me*” (Gen 24:27).

D. What is the Secret of Divine Guidance?

*“Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.” Pro 3:5–6*

E. Analysis

In this simple passage, we are given **four keys** to unlock the secret of divine guidance:

1. Be humble

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart”

- a. First and foremost, divine guidance is a matter of faith. We are promised that the Spirit will guide us, but are we willing to believe and act on the promise?
- b. This trust (*batach*) is an active, imperative urging us to bold confidence in the Lord. The verb pictures the act of throwing an opponent down on his face. In Pro 28:1, it says, *“The righteous are bold as a lion.”* There the word *“bold”* is the same word and speaks of continuous, unrelenting trust in God.
- c. Such trust implies the absence of doubt (the “double-mindedness” of Jam 1:8). To trust with the “whole heart” is unconditional confidence in God.
- d. The point is, God will guide you if you will trust Him to guide you! This
 - 1) Requires the diligent study of the Word of God;
 - 2) Then, the willingness to act on what God’s Word says; and
 - 3) Finally, the ability to trust Him to accomplish His will.

2. Be teachable

“And lean not on your own understanding”

- a. In conjunction with trust in God, there is the need to jettison our own hopes, desires, and expectations. We simply do not know what is best in God’s plan.
- b. The word *“lean”* means “to use as a crutch, to lean on for support.” We tend to rely heavily on our expectations of the “right way” for God to lead us!
- c. Personal aspirations and inclinations must be surrendered without reservation. This is the meaning of “denying self,” as seen in Luk 9:23.
- d. Along with this, we must relinquish the idea that God will lead in the easy, comfortable, and—to us—“acceptable” path.
- e. Of far greater importance to God than our personal comfort and security is the training of a spiritually mature son—a skilled warrior in spiritual warfare.

3. **Be thankful**

“In all your ways acknowledge Him”

- a. The word “*acknowledge*” is “to know,” in the imperative mood. We can draw two vital lessons from this word:
 - 1) First, in all our ways, goings, and doings, we are to seek to know our Lord and Savior more deeply and completely. This implies the consideration of whether or not I am going in a way that honors Him and glorifies Him.
 - 2) Second, it suggests making Him known in all our ways. We are to be faithful witnesses to His character and His Word in what we say and do.
- b. The evidence of trust in God’s guidance is a confident assurance, which makes known to others that we trust in the living God to direct our paths:
 - 1) We acknowledge Him in our prayers, making known our dependence.
 - 2) We acknowledge Him in declaring to others our trust in His leading.
 - 3) We acknowledge Him by lives that reflect His character and truth.

4. **Be confident**

“And He shall direct your paths”

- a. When the three conditions given above are met, we have the promise of His guidance.
- b. The verb “*direct*” is *yashar*, and is in the intensive stem. It could be translated “He will certainly, surely, make straight your paths.” It also implies an ending of the path that is pleasant and prosperous. All of God’s guidance leads to our ultimate good in the end (Gen 50:20; Rom 8:28).
- c. My personal experience is that this guidance is most often unconscious to us, and without external “signs” or “indicators” that we commonly expect.
- d. Rather, it is a very faint, inner urging or compulsion, which often contradicts our personal inclinations.

*“Your ears shall hear a word behind you [now within us] saying,
‘This is the way, walk in it.’” Isa 30:21*

5. **Illustration**

“A still, small voice [saying] ... ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’”

1Ki 19:12–13

- a. Elijah had been guided by God to lead the Mount Carmel revival (1Ki 18:20–46).
- b. Then, on hearing of Jezebel’s death threats, he gave in to fear and fled (1Ki 19:3). In this, he was “leaning on his own understanding,” allowing his doubts and personal desires to lead him astray.
- c. Yet, when he fled, God did not forsake him. He was supplied and sustained by God’s faithfulness, in spite of his disobedience (1Ki 19:5–8). Our unfaithfulness will never alter the faithfulness of God!

- d. The great “signs” of wind, earthquake, and fire, illustrate to us that we are not to look for guidance in outward “evidences” or “fleeces” (*cf.*, Gideon, Jdg 6:37).
 - e. The voice of the Spirit is “*still*” and “*small*,” and will not be heard unless we listen intently. Notice three things that happened here with Elijah:
 - 1) The Spirit brought conviction of disobedience, 1Ki 19:13b. This is in conjunction with an attitude of humility expressed by Elijah, 1Ki 19:13a.
 - 2) New direction and guidance was now given, in line with God’s intended purpose and will, 1Ki 19:15–16.
 - 3) New revelation is given to show that Elijah’s “understanding” on which he “leaned” (see 1Ki 19:14) was false, and had led him astray.
6. **Four Lessons from Paul’s Experience, Act 16:6–10**
- a. Answer the call and command of God (Mat 28:18–20; Act 1:8).
 - b. Keep moving forward when you meet obstacles and “closed doors.” You can’t guide a ship that is standing still!
 - c. Remember that “closed doors” help to guide you to the “open door” (1Co 16:9).
 - d. Be open to the counsel of others. Note that “we ... concluded” here includes the author Luke, who appears to have joined Paul’s team at this point, and may even have been the “*man from Macedonia*.”

X. Summary

- The experience of being guided by the Holy Spirit is often humbling to us, as we learn again and again that we know so little of what God is actually doing.
- When the Spirit led Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch (Act 8:26ff), he was led away from a great revival that was going on (Act 8:4–8). Humanly speaking, this would make no sense—to leave an entire city for one African eunuch.
- However, this man carried the Gospel into Africa, and only God knows the spread and impact of his witness.
- The guidance of the Holy Spirit will often seem contrary to “common sense,” but it will never violate the standards of God’s Word. Humility, submission, and implicit trust in God’s perfect plan are ingredients of our being guided to do His perfect will.
- Only eternity will reveal the rewards for those who yield to the guiding ministry of the Spirit of God!

Wilderness Lessons

Just a week before this conference, Nan and I spent six days on a trek through the Mazatzal wilderness and into Bloody Basin, in the highlands of central Arizona. The trails there have long ago been obliterated by fires and regrowth, so we learned some valuable lessons on divine guidance:

1. God answers prayer. He knows what is best, and we can trust Him to lead us to it. But His answers come in “concurrence” with our searching to find the way.
2. Pray for guidance, and trust that it will be given, but keep moving and searching.
3. The evidence of trust is in moving forward, not in standing still. As the Apalai tribe in Brazil said, “You can’t steer the canoe if it is not moving faster than the current.”

Point: You can’t steer a still ship!

4. His guidance is not always easily seen, not always immediate, nor always comfortable. Spiritual growth takes us outside our comfort zone.
5. Sometimes He guides us, even as we deviate for a while, to teach us further lessons (like not following our own assumptions about where to go).

Principle: *“Nature loves small errors ... humans don’t. Hence when you rely on human judgment you are at the mercy of a mental bias (normalcy bias) that disfavors antifragility”* (Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *Antifragility*, p. 85). It is always easier to work as a team in map-reading and finding trail markers, and then come to a consensus.

6. God will give confirmation of “the way,” or He will convict us of missing it.

The Doctrine of Concurrence

“Undoubtedly the human writers of Scripture were conscious that they were expressing their own thoughts as they wrote. But at the same time they were under the sovereign direction of the Spirit. Theologians call this two-dimensional reality ‘concurrence.’ God works in His ordinary providence in a way that involves concurrence. He is active in bringing about His purposes, yet, at the same time, we are also active in a significant way. In one and the same event, God is active in a ‘God-way’ while we are active in a ‘human way’ ... There is mystery here, of course, since God is God and we are not. But the concept of concurrence prevents us from adopting a mistaken logic and concluding that if God is active in an event then, to that extent, man must be inactive.”

Sinclair B. Ferguson, *From the Mouth of God*, p. 11

A. Three of His Examples

1. *“But as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good ...”*
Gen 50:20.

Here, we see that God’s eternal plan is not hindered nor threatened by any evil actions of men. Though He does not force them to so act, yet He is able to

turn their cursing into blessing, because He is God (see Deu 23:5, where God turned the curse of Balaam into blessing).

2. *“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand ...”* Dan 1:1–2.
Nebuchadnezzar is acting on purely personal motives; yet, his actions will fulfill the will of God for the scourging of Judah for her unfaithfulness.
3. *“Him being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death,”* Act 2:23.

Question: Does the fact that Jesus was ordained to suffer and die from the foundation of the world remove the blood-guilt of those Peter is speaking to?

B. My Application Regarding Salvation

To the best of my knowledge, Dr. Ferguson is a Calvinist. I do not know if he has considered the Doctrine of Concurrence in regard to election.

1. *“But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father has been working until now, and I have been working’”* Joh 5:17.
This is an astounding statement regarding concurrence. Jesus argues that the Father is working for the regeneration of men, and at the same time, Jesus is—as the God-man—also working toward the goal of providing salvation.

Point: When we serve by faith, in the power of the Spirit, we are doing exactly as Jesus did—working in cooperation with the Father for His eternal ends.

2. *“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me [God’s part], and the one who comes to Me [man’s part, cf., Joh 6:29] I will by no means cast out,”* Joh 6:37.
Every believer is a gift from the Father to the Son. Yet, each one must volitionally come of their own accord.
3. *“And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed,”* Act 13:48b.
Here, the verb *tasso* is a perfect, passive, participle, in conjunction with the verb *eimi* (to be) in the imperfect, active, indicative. This is a perfect periphrastic, which speaks of that which was done in the eternal counsels of God with continuing effect (cf., Rev 13:8; Rev 17:8). Yet, we ought not to overlook the fact that *“believed”* is aorist, active, indicative, showing the volitional response on the human side to believe the message.

C. Conclusion

1. The Doctrine of Concurrence does not remove the mystery of God’s working, but it goes far to help us avoid unbalanced theological extremes.
2. If God is fully active in an event, His actions are not coerced or influenced in any way by those of man.

3. At the same time, we ought not to think of God as being so small that He must “make” or “force” people to do what He wants, so as to achieve His will.
4. The Doctrine of Concurrence introduces us to a far greater, deeper, and glorious prospect. God is able to “[work] *all things ... together for good*” (Rom 8:28), because His nature is interwoven into all creation, so that all decisions and choices by man’s free agent (free will) can **only** work to fulfill His purpose. In the end, evil will be avenged and good will be rewarded because those acts, by their very nature, demand such an end.
5. It was great insight into the Doctrine of Concurrence that brought Paul to say:

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out. ‘For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him, and it shall be repaid to him?’ For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things; to whom be glory forever. Amen.”

Rom 11:33–36 (see also Isa 40:13; Jer 23:18;
Job 36:22; Job 41:11; Heb 2:10; Heb 13:21)