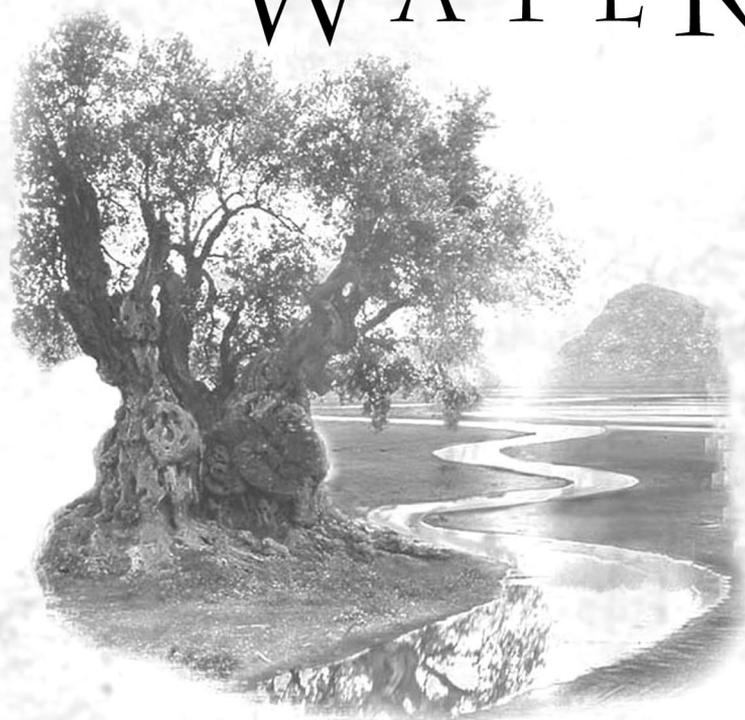


RIVERS
OF
LIVING
WATER



A STUDY ON
BIBLICAL SPIRITUALITY

GENE CUNNINGHAM

As Jesus Christ prepared to send the disciples for the first time throughout Israel with His message, He included in their instructions this admonition: “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matt. 10:8). This six-word summary of grace explains the financial policy of the publications and audio ministries of Basic Training. All audio materials and publications are provided without charge to anyone who requests them. For a catalog of available materials write:



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“Endure hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 2:3)

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the two greatest ladies in my life. First to my mother, Ruth Cunningham, whose life of sacrificial service has blessed so many. Without your prayers, I would not have found the “River” (and Giver) of life.

Second to my faithful wife Nan, who is a true champion in the great endurance race of life. Without your loyal love to anchor me, where would I be today?

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Ken and Sharon Curcio for their encouragement and help in ways too numerous to mention. Also, I want to thank Sharon and Claudia Dideum for proofreading, editing and formatting, as well as Kit Henderson, Kate Heilig and others who provided valuable assistance.

A special note of appreciation to Benjamin Phenicie for his extraordinary cover design and graphic art. Your artistic creation captured precisely what I had imagined. Thanks, Ben!

May God bless you all for your patience and professionalism in seeing this work through to completion.

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Preface: The Purpose Behind This Book

I had been teaching for two weeks in the mountain village of Numba in the mountains of Papua, New Guinea. My wife, Nancy, and I had the privilege of working with Jim and Jaki Parlier, veteran missionaries with Wycliffe Bible Translators. They had invested their lives in translating the New Testament into the Managalase language. During the years of their service, many indigenous churches were planted. In their concern to see the pastors of the region receive a degree of Bible training, they had organized a bi-annual Bible conference so that the central themes of Scripture could be carefully studied.

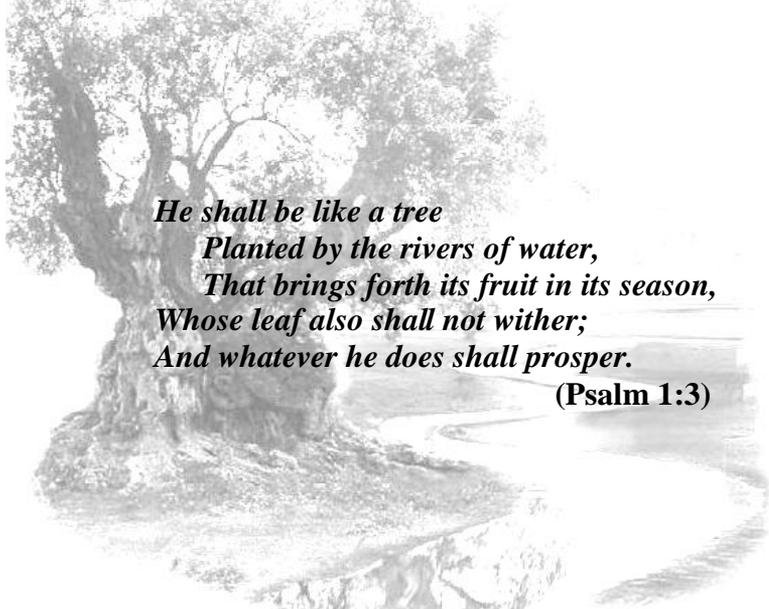
On the night before we were to depart, a Yam Feast was organized. Before we went to the village church, Jim said to me, “Ask for a pastor Haggai, and have a look at his Bible.” I knew this must be the moment I had been praying for. Though we were limited to bare essentials, I had brought a new leather bound Bible which I had used for the conference. My prayer was that God would guide me to the pastor to whom He wanted me to give this Bible. When I found Pastor Haggai at the feast, I asked to see his Bible. He brought me a small tattered Bible. Everything before Psalm 26 was missing and the book of Revelation was gone. Many pages were falling out and the print so small it was difficult to read in the dim light. Holding his Bible, I asked pastor Haggai if he would like to trade his Bible. At first, he was alarmed, thinking I wanted to take his Bible from him. I then held up my leather bound Bible, and asked if he would let me have his Bible if I gave him mine. His face lit up and he quickly reached out for the greatest gift in the world, the complete Word of God. Haggai told me later he had been led to faith in Christ in 1991, entering the ministry some years later. This partial copy was the only Bible he had ever owned.

Pastor Haggai and his tattered Bible illustrate why I am writing this book. Christians in the wealthy western world have an overabundance of Christian literature. Conditions are the opposite for

believers in the poor churches of the third world. I have visited many churches in South America, Africa, India, and Asia. Often, only the pastor has a Bible. In some cases, this may only be a New Testament. Bible study materials for most are out of the question. The resulting situation means that these pastors struggle to lead their congregations without the benefit of Bible school training, and are deprived of the costly study materials that would greatly enhance their understanding of the Word of God and bless their congregations.

It is to the need of these pastors and workers of the village churches of the third world that this volume is devoted. For this reason, it is written in simple, non-technical language. It will be translated and printed in the countries where it will be used. All copies will be distributed without cost. This has always been the policy of Basic Training Bible Ministries. It is my conviction that the church of the western world is a debtor to the grace of God to see that Christians of the poor church of the third world are provided such materials as necessary for the training of leaders, and the spiritual growth of individual believers. My prayer is that this simple work might add to that supply and, in some measure, meet that need.

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit.” (Jeremiah 17:7–8)



*He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper.
(Psalm 1:3)*

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” (John 7:37–38)

Before you begin any study of the Word of God, take a few moments to make sure that you are in fellowship with God, filled with the Holy Spirit. Comprehension, like everything else in the Christian life, is a gift that can be appropriated only by faith. The Bible clearly lays out three requirements that must be met before we can expect to understand God's Word. All three require nothing from us but faith.

1. *We must be believers in Jesus Christ* (John 3:16).

It is impossible for unbelievers to understand the Word of God (1 Cor. 2:14). Jesus declared to the leading religious leader of His day that apart from spiritual birth man is blind to the things of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit ... You must be born again" (John 3:6).

2. *We must be filled with the Spirit* (1 Cor. 2:12).

Only the Spirit of God knows the thoughts of God. As believers we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but when we sin, we break fellowship with God and cease to function in the power of the Spirit. When we confess our sins, God is always faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). The moment we confess, we are restored to fellowship and are again under the control of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, able to learn.

3. *We must approach in faith* (Heb. 11:6).

Only when we approach in humility, with child-like faith, will the Word of God make sense to us (Matt. 18:4; Heb. 11:3). Where we find Scripture at odds with our ideas or our desires, we must submit to the authority of the Word. Intimacy, understanding, and power are reserved for those who are willing to do God's will (John 7:17).



Chapter 1

THE SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL POWER

All Spiritual Power Originates with the Holy Spirit

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37–39)

These words of Jesus make clear that the source of spiritual power is the Holy Spirit of God. Spiritual power is of God, not of man. “*That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*” (John 3:6). To better understand Jesus’ promise of “*living water*” we should consider three things in the above passage:

1. The setting. Jesus was attending the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2, 10, 14). For the first seven days of this feast, priests would carry water from the pool of Siloam to the Temple. There it was poured over the altar as a symbol of the cleansing power of the coming Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world (John 1:29, 36). The eighth day was a solemn assembly when the multitude would stand in silent contemplation. The ritual of water was not carried out, indicating that the cleansing could not be provided until the Messiah of God came. It was during this time of silence, while the vast multitude considered the promise of the coming Messiah, that Jesus cried out this invitation. The water He offered was the same water offered the woman at the well

(John 4:13–14). This was the spiritual water promised by the prophets of Israel.

“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”
(Ezek. 36:25–27)

2. The condition. As with most promises in the Bible, there are conditions that must be met in claiming them. The condition here is that one must have thirst. This is speaking of spiritual desire, and again, is an Old Testament word-picture.

“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you—the sure mercies of David.”
(Isa. 55:1–3)

The “*thirst*” here is for the only thing that can satisfy the need of the human soul—the eternal life of God. Those who desire the life of God must receive it from God. This life can only be received by faith. You cannot buy it with acts of human good. The only currency God will accept is that which He values, and that is faith alone in Christ alone. Isaiah says we must “*buy*” without money or price. There is nothing we can give that is worthy of eternal salvation. That is why Jesus compares the act of drinking to that of

believing in Him: “*Come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me...*” (John 7:37–38).

If we are to receive eternal life, we must receive it through the agency of His Holy Spirit. The Scripture teaches us that God the Father is the planner of our salvation. God the Son is the one who executes the work of salvation on the cross. God the Holy Spirit supplies eternal salvation to those who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior (see Eph. 1:3–13). It is God who sets the conditions for the reception of His promises. The condition for receiving the “*living water*” is simple childlike faith in Jesus Christ.

3. The provision. John explains for us here that by “*living water*” Jesus is speaking of the gift of the Holy Spirit. When we receive the Holy Spirit, we receive a brand new eternal, spiritual life. This new spiritual life cannot be separated from the Spirit of God. When God created Adam physically, He “*breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being*” (Gen. 2:7). This pattern is followed in spiritual birth. In the original language of the Old Testament (Hebrew), the word for “spirit,” “wind,” and “breath” is the same. The “*breath*” of the Spirit of God is the Word of God. The literal translation of 2 Timothy 3:16 (from the New Testament Greek) is “*All Scripture is God-breathed.*” This is why we are told, “*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Rom. 10:17). When we receive the Gospel by faith, we ‘inhale’ the spiritual breath of the Spirit of God. It is by His breath that we are born into the family of God and become His child.

While it is true that believers of the Old Testament time also received eternal life by the Spirit of God, things changed dramatically after the cross. The finished work of Christ now provides for much greater provisions of grace. “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*” (Eph. 1:3). To the believer in the New Testament time (also known as the Church Age), God has granted all the riches of His heavenly

storehouse in Christ Jesus. The greatest “gift,” which brings all other gifts, is the gift of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is the presence of the Spirit of God in the life that is the sure mark of the child of God. *“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His”* (Rom. 8:9).

It is by the indwelling and enabling presence of the Holy Spirit that the Christian is empowered to live a life of spiritual power. All spiritual power originates with the Spirit of God. To the first disciples Jesus said, *“Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high”* (Luke 24:49). The word “endued” means “to be clothed.” It is the purpose of the indwelling Spirit to clothe the believer with the power of the very life of Christ. The Apostle Paul said, *“It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God...”* (Gal. 2:20–21a). The point Paul is making is important. In Ephesians 2:8 and Colossians 2:6, spiritual living, like spiritual life, is received by grace alone through faith alone. The supplier of both is the Spirit of God. He is the *“Fountain of living waters”* (Jer. 2:13) whose supply never fails. As we go along, we will see the way in which that supply is provided.



Chapter 2

THE SECURITY OF SPIRITUAL POWER *God Has Secured Spiritual Power for Believers*

“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever ... For He dwells with you, and will be in you.”
(John 14:16–17b)

It is important to remember that when Jesus talked of “*rivers of living water*” (John 7:38), He was speaking of an everlasting and unending supply for spiritual living flowing in the believer’s life from the indwelling Holy Spirit. It would be of little value to the Christian if the indwelling of the Spirit were temporary or could be lost in some way. Some have been confused because of a wrong application of David’s repentance prayer in which he pleads that God not take the Spirit away.

Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. (Ps. 51:11)

It must be remembered that the relationship between the Holy Spirit with the Old Testament saint and the relationship between the Holy Spirit with that of the church age believer living after the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord is not the same. As we have already seen in John’s explanation of Jesus’ words: “*For the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified*” (John 7:39). Though certain saints of the Old Testament were endued and even indwelt by the Spirit, the Spirit was not yet given in the New Testament sense of personal and permanent indwelling of every believer. What David feared was exactly what happened

to Samson as a result of his sin, “*But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him*” (Judg. 16:20).

Three differences can be found in our opening reference (John 14:16–17b) between the work of the Spirit today and the work of the Spirit in Old Testament times:

1. The gift of the Spirit is universal. By this, we are not referring to all mankind, but to each individual believer. When Jesus says, “*He will give you,*” the “*you*” here is plural and includes every believer in Jesus Christ. This is what amazed Peter and other Jews after the conversion of the household of Cornelius. He says in Acts 11:17, “*If therefore God gave them the same gift [the Holy Spirit] as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?*” As Paul makes very clear in Romans 8:9, “*Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.*” Clearly, every believer is indwelt by the Spirit of God. This was not the case in Old Testament times when only certain people were empowered, and this was often only temporary.

2. The gift of the Spirit is permanent. The language of Jesus is very clear on this: “*That He may abide with you forever.*” The believer in Jesus Christ can never lose the Spirit, because he cannot lose eternal life. We do not deserve the precious indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. His coming is a provision of the grace of God for our spiritual enablement. As surely as everyone who has trusted Christ will be indwelt, it is just as certain that this gift is secure and eternal. We will see in a later chapter what effect sin in the life of the Christian has on the inner work of the Spirit. Nevertheless, it is essential at this point to know that our sins and failures can never have the effect of causing the Holy Spirit to depart from us. As He has promised, “*The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out*” (John 6:37b), and “*I will never leave you nor forsake you*” (Heb. 13:5). In both of these unconditional promises, the strongest possible words are used in the original (Greek) language and we would translate them “*Absolutely never,*

ever!” to get the full force of the statement. Again, this is not the condition that existed for believers of Old Testament times.

3. The gift of the Spirit is “within,” not “beside.” To the disciples before the crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus said, *“For He dwells with you, and will be in you.”* The customary way of enabling believers in Old Testament times was for the Spirit to work on them from the outside. This is why we read of Samson, *“And the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon him”* (Judg. 13:25a), and *“The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him”* (Judg. 14:6a). This was a temporary empowerment for a special task. The Spirit empowered him from the outside and departed when the task was finished. The great contrast now, in the Church Age, is that the Spirit of the Lord is dwelling within the believer. It is for this reason that Paul declares, *“Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?”* (1 Cor. 6:19). Even the writers of Old Testament Scripture were *“Holy men of God [who] spoke as they were moved [carried along] by the Holy Spirit”* (2 Pet. 1:21b). In addition, these same prophets then diligently studied and searched their own inspired writings in amazement at the wonder of the future time when the Holy Spirit would be given so freely to men. *“To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look to”* (1 Pet. 1:12).

THE FIVE WAYS OUR SPIRITUAL POWER IS SECURED

So far, we have emphasized the permanence of the Spirit’s indwelling. We should take the time to note that this indwelling is but one of five works that the Spirit has accomplished for each believer at the moment of salvation. These works are a part of our *“so great a salvation”* (Heb. 2:3). Each of these five works is fully

accomplished when we receive eternal life, and they are true for everyone who believes in Jesus Christ.

1. The baptism of the Holy Spirit – 1 Corinthians 12:13

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

The baptism of the Spirit is true of all—that is all—believers. As Paul makes clear in Romans 6:3–5, this work of the Spirit takes the benefits of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and applies them to the believer. It is by the baptism of the Spirit that we enter into the “*body*” of our Lord and become members of His Church. This is the “*one baptism*” (Eph. 4:5) that all believers share in “*the unity of the Spirit*” (Eph. 4:3).

2. The regeneration of the Spirit – Titus 3:5

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.

The word “*regeneration*” literally means to be “born again,” and “*renewing*” means “to make of new quality.” Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3:7, “*You must be born again.*”

It is to this new spiritual quality of life that Paul refers in 2 Corinthians 5:17a when he says, “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.*” The word “*renewing*” in Titus and the word “*new*” in 2 Corinthians are the same word and speak of a new spiritual quality of life. This new life is permanent and eternal in nature.

3. The indwelling of the Spirit – Romans 8:9–11

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

It is worthwhile to notice that the indwelling of the Spirit of God represents each member of the Holy Trinity in the believer's life. Here He is referred to as “*The Spirit of God,*” “*The Spirit of Christ,*” “*The Spirit of Him who raised Jesus,*” and simply, “*The Spirit.*” By the indwelling of the Spirit, we have the presence of the Godhead represented: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

4. The gifting of the Spirit – Ephesians 4:7

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Spiritual gifts are given for our life of service to God. As with the other works of the Spirit at salvation, this provision of a spiritual gift is permanent. “*For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable*” (Rom. 11:29). We will look more closely at spiritual gifts in a later chapter.

5. The sealing of the Spirit – Ephesians 1:13

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

The seal of the Spirit is the guarantee of the security of our salvation. In the ancient world, the seal was the mark of the signet ring of a king or wealthy merchant. It indicated the identity of the owner, the security of what was sealed, and its safe delivery to the intended destination. It is in this way that Paul uses the word “seal,” regarding the offering of the churches for the poor saints in Jerusalem, when he says, *“Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain”* (Rom. 15:28). The offering belonged to the Jerusalem saints. Paul would see that it was secure and safely delivered to them. This is where we get the saying, “Signed, sealed, and delivered.” Like the address and stamp on a letter, God has put His address and stamp on the soul of the believer. He will see to it that we are safely delivered into His presence. What security and stability of soul is ours in Christ! For Paul declares, *“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee”* (2 Cor. 1:21–22).

The guarantee of a God who cannot lie (Heb. 6:18) is cause for great assurance that the spiritual life and power, which God has made available through His Spirit, is the permanent possession of every child of God.



Chapter 3

THE SUPPLY OF SPIRITUAL POWER

Jesus' Teaching on the Work of the Holy Spirit

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
(Acts 1:8)

The provision of the Holy Spirit is power—not just any kind of power—but spiritual power. As John indicated in his gospel (7:39), this power was not to be available until Jesus was glorified. The gift of the Spirit was not given until Pentecost, fifty days after the resurrection (Lev. 23:16), also called the “Feast of Weeks” (Num. 28:26). It was a time of bringing in the firstfruits of harvest (Lev. 23:17). These firstfruits are a picture of the believers of the Church Age (Rom. 8:23; James 1:18). Here we see the fulfilment of the first three of the Feasts of Israel (see Lev. 23:1–8): Passover (the cross), Unleavened Bread (fellowship through cleansing), and Pentecost (advent of the Spirit, firstfruits of the Church). In the passage from Acts above, we note three things:

1. Spiritual power is a gift. Remember that in Luke 24:49, Jesus told the disciples that they would be “*endued*” or “*clothed*” with power from on high. He is using the passive voice here. This means that this is not something we *do*, but something that is *done to us*. We receive it. Here in Acts, Jesus says, “*You shall receive power.*” This power is the result of believing in Him and receiving the “*living water*” of the Holy Spirit, as He said in John 7:37–39. Whenever we receive anything from God, it is always a free gift provided by His grace and received by faith.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name. (John 1:12)

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 6:23)

If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink’, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water. (John 4:10)

These verses make it clear that eternal life is a free gift that can only be received by faith. The moment we try to add some work to faith, it is no longer faith.

And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work. (Rom. 11:6)

It is at the moment of receiving eternal life that the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in the believer. It is from Him by faith that we receive power to live the Christian life. The Christian life is nothing other than Christ living in and through us (Gal. 2:20).

2. Spiritual power is the Spirit’s power. This power does not exist where the Holy Spirit is not in control. As we will see in a later chapter, while the Spirit indwells all believers, not all are under the control of the Spirit. We receive the Holy Spirit at salvation, once for all, *by faith*. In the same way, we receive His power—His control in our lives—day by day *by faith*. As we read three times in the New Testament, “*The just shall live by faith*” (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38). Once we have been justified (declared righteous in Christ) we must still choose to live daily by faith.

Biblical faith is unique in this regard, as it must have a point of focus. In other words, our faith needs *someone* or *something* to

believe in. It is not just faith in faith. It is, in fact, faith in someone to do something. That someone is Jesus Christ working through His Spirit. But what is the something He is to do? If the Holy Spirit is the source of spiritual power, how does He impart that power to us? What do we need to believe to daily “*live by faith*”? We will soon answer these questions.

3. Spiritual power is a witness to the victory of Jesus Christ. Jesus said to the disciples, “*You shall be witnesses to Me.*” The word “witness” originally meant “someone who was called to give testimony in a court of law.” The witness was to simply declare what he had seen and heard. He was to tell what he knew—that was all. We get the word “martyr” from the original Greek word for “witness,” and it speaks of someone who is put to death for his or her witness. It is the work of the Spirit of God to make each believer a living witness to the victory of Christ over Satan, sin, and death. We do this as we declare what we have *heard*, from the Bible story of His death, burial, and resurrection. We also tell what we have *seen* in His power to transform the lives of others. Most important is our silent witness of a life of spiritual power. This is a life that displays the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whenever God transforms one from a life of self-centered living to sacrificial living, from hate and bitterness to love and mercy, from sinful indulgence of lust to selfless service to others, the world has a visible display of spiritual power. Again, we need to ask the question: How does the Spirit supply this power? Let us now look at the answer.

JESUS’ TEACHING ON THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The most extensive teaching on the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is found in the Upper Room Message (John 13–17). On His last night with the disciples before the crucifixion, Jesus carefully instructed them in what to expect when the Spirit came. Most significant is the name that He uses three times to refer to the Holy Spirit. He calls Him “*The Spirit of Truth*” (John 14:17;

15:26; 16:13). It is here that we begin to see the close relationship of the Spirit with the Word of God. Jesus hinted at this in talking to the woman at the well when He said, “*God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth*” (John 4:24).

The more I study the Bible, the more I am convinced that you cannot separate the Spirit of God from the Word of God. It was the Holy Spirit who moved holy men of God to record the inspired Word of God (2 Pet. 1:21). Once, when He was teaching a rebellious group of people, Jesus said to them, “*It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life*” (John 6:63). Those who do not give a place of priority to the careful study of and obedience to God’s Word will never know the power of the Holy Spirit in its true biblical sense. It is by imparting to us God’s Word that the Spirit empowers us for life.

We do not have space here to do a complete study of the Upper Room Message. It is worthwhile, however, to list some of the prominent things Jesus sent the Spirit to do:

- 1) The Spirit will cleanse us of sin when we confess our need of it (John 13:8–10 with 1 John 1:9). We will see more about this later.
- 2) Having cleansed us, He imparts the blessing of obedience (John 13:17). This includes the power to love one another as Christ loves us (John 13:34–35).
- 3) The Holy Spirit empowers us to the “*greater works,*” which He says are performed through prayer (John 14:12–14).
- 4) The Spirit came to indwell us (John 14:17–18), to teach us God’s Word (John 14:26), and to bring us His peace (John 14:27; 16:33).
- 5) By His power, we are to abide in fellowship with Christ and be fruitful, thus glorifying Him (John 15:1–8).
- 6) By the Spirit, we can know the joy of His communion (John 15:9–15) and we can be bold to witness to a hostile world (John 15:18–27).

- 7) The Holy Spirit will aid the witness we bear by convicting the world of three essential truths (John 16:7–11): the sin of rejecting Christ, the righteousness available to those who believe, and the judgment awaiting those who continue to follow the devil—Satan.
- 8) The Spirit will guide us in life to know the will of God (John 16:13).
- 9) He will make our prayers effective (John 16:23–28).
- 10) The work of the Spirit is to sanctify us (set us apart to God) through God’s Word (John 17:14–19).

Even in this very incomplete survey of Jesus’ teaching on the Holy Spirit, we can see that all His work is dependant on our willingness to give God’s Word first place in our lives. The supply of spiritual power is provided through the Spirit-inspired Word of God. It was for this reason that the apostles set the standard in the story of the early Church. Refusing to be lead astray by other needs in the church, they ordained that deacons should be selected for those tasks, saying, *“It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables...But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word”* (Acts 6:2, 4). Moreover, what was the result of their decision? *“Then the word of God spread, and the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem...”* (Acts 6:7). This is the evidence of the Spirit at work. How we need more pastors who will devote themselves to God’s Word, depending upon the Holy Spirit in all their study and teaching, praying for His power to win souls and change lives!



Chapter 4

THE STRUGGLE FOR SPIRITUAL POWER

Clear Definition of the Contrast of “Spiritual” v. “Carnal”

For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.
(Gal. 5:17)

When we are born into this world, we enter into a spiritual battlefield. Satan and his angels have declared war against God and against Jesus Christ (Rev. 12:3, 4, 7–9). Whether we realize it or not, the nations of the world are caught up in this universal conflict (Ps. 2). In addition, when we are born again, we become frontline fighters (Eph. 6:10–18). More than that, the conflict, which encompasses the universe, now enters into our very being. The natural, sinful nature in us is a power now broken by the indwelling Spirit. *“Knowing this, that our old man [life under the dominion of the sin nature] was crucified with Him, that the body of sin [the reign of the sin nature] might be done away with [rendered powerless] that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”* (Rom. 6:6). However, the sin nature is still present in the believer and will fight the work of the Spirit at every step. Let us take notice of three important truths contained in the Galatians quote above:

1. There is an inner war to be fought. The Spirit and the flesh are passionately hostile to each other. Here, the *“flesh”* refers to the indwelling sin nature that claims its dominion through cravings of the body. When we are born again we become a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:23–24). The Holy Spirit takes up His

residence in this righteous and holy new creature (Rom. 8:9–11). Thus, the believer is a three-part being of “*spirit, soul, and body*” (1 Thess. 5:23). Because of the new indwelling of God’s Spirit in our human spirit, there is now a state of war within that did not exist in our unbelieving state. Between the ‘fort’ of the human spirit (in which the Holy Spirit dwells) and the ‘fort’ of the flesh (in which the sin nature dwells) is the battlefield. This no-mans-land is the soul of the believer. The two mortal enemies will battle for the control of the soul (Prov. 4:23). From the soul comes all thinking, willing, and doing. If the soul surrenders to the Spirit, then the life will be spiritual in nature. If instead, the soul surrenders to the sin nature, the life will be carnal. It is to this inner warfare that Paul refers in Romans 7:23, “*But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*”

2. There can be no truce between flesh and Spirit. Paul declares that the two indwelling natures in the Christian are “*contrary to one another.*” This is a weak translation. The Greek word pictures two armies, poised in readiness, and resolutely determined to defeat each other. It is war to the death! There will never be a time during our life on this earth when we will be free of the sinful nature. When the sin nature is in control, the believer is carnal and will produce “*the works of the flesh*” (Gal. 5:19–21). The believer in a carnal condition, Paul says, “*will not inherit the kingdom of God*” (v. 21). This does not mean the loss of salvation, as some suppose. Rather, it indicates two very clear truths: first, that believer will forfeit his or her birthright during the time they remain carnal.

For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking [or any other bodily gratification] but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 14:17)

We cannot enjoy our inheritance as children of God when we are carnal! We are like the prodigal son, alienated from his Father and fighting the pigs for the slop. The second truth is that during the

time that sin is dominating our life, we are losing precious eternal rewards. Our life in carnality can only produce “*wood, hay, straw* [the works of the flesh]” rather than “*gold, silver, precious stones*” (1 Cor. 3:12). In other words, we run the risk of being “*disqualified*” (1 Cor. 9:27) from winning “*the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*” (Phil. 3:14) if we fail to confess our sins and recover spirituality. Fortunately, there will never come a time when the Spirit of God ceases to battle for victory in our lives. As believers, we always have the opportunity to “*present [our] bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God*” (Rom. 12:1). Additionally, when the Spirit is in control of our lives, we will produce the fruit of the character of Jesus Christ.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. (Gal. 5:22–23)

The solution to the conflict is willing surrender by the believer to the Spirit of God. When we commit sin, our surrender begins with confession of that sin to God that we may be forgiven and cleansed. We will deal with this more fully in a later section. This leads to our third consideration:

3. We are free—only to choose which we will serve. There is wonderful freedom for the believer in Christ. We have been delivered from the condemnation and penalty of sin. God has transferred us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Jesus Christ (Col. 1:13). In fact, Galatians 5 is a passage urging us to hold to this freedom.

Stand fast therefore in the liberty [freedom] by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. (Gal. 5:1)

It is also clear that we are not free to do whatever we want. As unbelievers, we were slaves of sin. We may have thought we were free from rules and restrictions, but all we could do was obey the

sinful nature. Now, in Christ, we have freedom from sin and its power. But only by choosing to serve in the power of the Spirit of God can we experience this freedom. In other words, our freedom consists of one of two choices—we can serve sin or we can serve the Spirit. This is why Paul says, “*You do not do [or cannot do] the things that you wish*” (Gal. 5:17). Notice how he presents our only options: “*For you, brethren, have been called to liberty [freedom]; only do not use freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another*” (Gal. 5:13).

The point of Galatians chapter five is clear. Our freedom involves a choice that we did not have in our unsaved state. We now can choose a different master than sin. We are free from the tyrant of death to serve the Lord of life.

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.
(James 4:7–8a)

There is an interesting figure used by the prophet Jeremiah that illustrates the difference between the spiritual and the carnal believer. Although the provisions for the believer in the church age are much more than for those of the Old Testament time, the picture Jeremiah uses is still true of us.

“For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and have hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water.”
(Jer. 2:13)

Instead of the ever-flowing, life-giving supply of God, they were laboring to dig pits to collect water that would grow stale. In addition, the pits (water tanks) were leaky. After all their work, they found the stone to be too porous. All the rainwater that collected soon ran out through many small fissures, leaving the cisterns dry. What a picture of the human soul trying to find fulfillment by its own effort! How much better it is to live by the

fresh, flowing fountain of never ending supply and satisfaction! This is the biblical picture of the spiritual life.

In Israel, there remain today such huge water tanks/cisterns carved out of the stone near the fortress of Masada. It is a hot, dry area with little rain.

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit.” (Jer. 17:7–8)



Chapter 5

THE STANDARD OF SPIRITUAL POWER

Spirituality is a Matter of Grace, Not of Law, or Merit

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” (Gal. 2:20)

The spiritual life is the life of Christ. He alone is the standard of spirituality. As I said earlier, the “*fruit of the Spirit*” is nothing other than the character of Jesus Christ. It is the work of the indwelling Spirit of God to produce His life in us. This will be more and more evident as we grow spiritually. In spiritual maturity, we attain “*to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect [the word means “mature”] man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*” (Eph. 4:13). It is always true that the spiritual believer will be a growing believer, because the Spirit will always lead us to God’s Word (John 14:26; 16:13) and work to bring us into conformity to Christ (Rom. 8:29, 12:2).

As we look at the verses at the beginning of John 1, we can conclude five truths that establish the working principles for the standard of spiritual power in our lives:

1. The life of Christ was a life of reflected glory. “*We beheld His glory.*” Remember that John was an eyewitness of the

life of Christ. He tells us that he and the other disciples “*beheld*” the Lord. This is the word that we get “theater” from. It means they watched Him carefully in all aspects of His life. After observing the Lord Jesus in all the various conditions of daily living, John says there was one powerful, lasting impression on those who saw Him. That impression was “*glory*.” The word means, “that which brings honor or praise to someone.” The glory in the life of Jesus brought honor and praise to the Father. All true glory belongs to God. This is what Paul means when he says, “*He who glories, let him glory in the Lord*” (1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 10:17). The glory of Jesus truly belonged to Him because He is God; but He was also reflecting to men—as a man—the glory of the Father. He made the nature of God understandable in human terms. As humans, we have no glory of our own. However, as children of God growing into Christ-likeness, we will also reflect His glory.

But we all [believers], beholding as in a mirror [the Bible] the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory [God’s revealed nature] to glory [God’s nature reflected], just as by the Spirit of the Lord.
(2 Cor. 3:18)

2. The life of Christ originated from the Father. When John states, “*as of the only begotten of the Father,*” he says that Jesus’ life was the product of the Father’s generation. “*The Word became flesh.*” This speaks of the miracle of the virgin conception and birth. Only Jesus was begotten directly by the Father in this way (John 1:18; 3:16; 1 John 4:9). Because of His direct lineage as the God–man, He was the perfect and sinless expression of God in human form. “*He is the image of the invisible God*” (Col. 1:15). The miraculous conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary was caused by the Holy Spirit who implanted the seed and brought forth that life (Heb. 1:8; Luke 1:35, 37; Matt. 1:18, 20); it is the same Spirit who reproduces the life of Christ in us.

3. The life of Christ is full of grace and truth. John says of Jesus that He was “*full of grace and truth.*” Three qualities here are

essential to the spiritual life. The first is “fullness.” We will study this same word later in relation to the filling of the Spirit. For now, it is sufficient to say that this word signifies a “wholeness” and “completeness”—a “state without lack.” The life of Jesus revealed the truth that “holiness” is not just the absence of sin, but is also a life of “wholeness.” It was a life of such spiritual health and vigor and, yes, even of such pure enjoyment of living that it put to shame the shabby pretence of the Pharisees. Jesus came “*eating and drinking*” and the religious leaders called Him “*a drunkard and glutton*” (Luke 7:34).

The second vital quality is that of “grace.” The essence of grace is that it is an undeserved gift of God. The very life Jesus lived was a gift of God to a sin-weary world. Love, grace, and mercy are an inseparable trinity in God’s dealing with mankind (Eph. 2:4–5). For the love of God to be poured out to sinful and undeserving man, His mercy must subtract our sin through forgiveness, and His grace must add what we lack—eternal life and the righteousness of Christ. Mercy takes away the judgment we richly deserve, while grace provides us the blessings that we do not deserve. “*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*” (Rom. 5:8). Everything in His earthly life spoke of the sacrificial love of God and His desire to bless His creatures. The matchless grace of God would accomplish what the Law of Moses never could (John 1:17).

Finally, the life of Christ was a life of “truth”—the very truth of God’s Word—lived out in the context of common daily life. He was the living Word, and His every word and deed was a demonstration of the written Word in action. Luke writes of “*all that Jesus began to do and to teach*” (Acts 1:1), expressing the perfect conformity between His life and His teaching. In beholding Jesus in daily life, the disciples saw the giving love of a merciful heavenly Father, the eternal truth of God’s Word, and the spiritual wholeness of being—that when perfectly combined in the Man, Christ Jesus, is the true definition of holiness.

4. The life of Christ is experienced only by believers.

Looking down to verse 16 of John 1 we read, “*And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.*” This same “*fullness*” that marked His life is given to each one who believes in Him. When John says, “*and grace for grace,*” he is emphasizing that we do not receive a diminished version of the life of Christ. Every quality of grace manifested in Him is given to us at the moment of our spiritual birth. We possess eternal life, which is the same as saying that we possess the life of Christ. This life is present in us by His indwelling Spirit. When Jesus promised the coming of the Holy Spirit, He said, “*I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you*” (John 14:18). Paul refers to the Holy Spirit as “*the Spirit of Christ*” (Rom. 8:9). The Spirit of God has one primary goal to achieve in each believer—to make us like Christ.

When the believer surrenders or “yields” to the Holy Spirit, a process of transformation and conformity begins to take place (cf. Rom. 6:12–14; 12:1–2). The Spirit is free to work toward the fulfillment of God’s plan that we who believe should be “*conformed to the image of His Son*” (Rom. 8:29). This is not only a work of His grace, but also of His truth. We must be willing to feed on His Word daily. God’s truth provides the building material needed by the Holy Spirit to mold and fashion us into the likeness of Christ. It is while we are “*beholding as in a mirror [the Bible] the glory of the Lord, [we] are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord*” (2 Cor. 3:18). This involves a process of spiritual growth in which we “*grow up in all things into Him*” (Eph. 4:15). As long as we are in this world, we will continue the battle against indwelling sin and the need to keep growing in His likeness.

5. The life of Christ is experienced only by active faith.

Later in the gospel of John, Jesus says, “*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*” (John 14:6). We enter the life of Christ at the moment we trust Him as Savior (John 1:12–13). At that moment, we have eternal life. In addition, Jesus also came to give us “*abundant life*” (John 10:10).

This is His very life being lived through us. For us to experience His life daily, we must daily live by faith. The Apostle Paul declares, *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me”* (Gal. 2:20). Active faith is not only believing God’s Word in theory, but also being willing to step out in dependence on the power of the Spirit to live that truth out in our own life. This is what James means when he says, *“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves”* (James 1:22). This is a faith that “works,” but we do not do the work (James 2:17, 26). The Spirit works in us as we trust Him to empower and enable us. It is in a right relationship to the Holy Spirit that we find the secret of spiritual power.



Chapter 6

THE SECRET OF SPIRITUAL POWER

Four Biblical Commands Regarding the Holy Spirit

Be filled with the Spirit.

(Eph. 5:18)

We have seen that the life of Jesus was a life of spiritual fullness, manifesting the grace and truth of God. The Holy Spirit indwells us to reproduce the life of Christ in us. The “fullness of the Spirit” is nothing less than the “fullness” of Christ’s life. This becomes even clearer when we look at how Paul develops the idea of fullness in the book of Ephesians. The Church is the body now manifesting His “fullness” (Eph. 1:23). That “fullness” is the expression of the love of Christ (Eph. 3:19) and is the product of spiritual growth (Eph. 4:13). In fact, the command “*to be filled with [or by] the Spirit*” is one of four commands in the New Testament regarding our relationship with the Holy Spirit:

1. Grieve not the Spirit. The first command, in logical order, is: “*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption*” (Eph. 4:30). Two facts stand out in this verse. First, the Holy Spirit is a person who is affected by the conduct of the believer. He has affection and all its related emotions (cf. James 4:5). Second, even when grieved by disobedient conduct, the Spirit remains faithful to keep us “*sealed for the day of redemption.*” How true it is that “*if we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself*” (2 Tim. 2:13).

The context surrounding this command makes it clear that the Spirit is grieved by sin in the believer’s life (Eph. 4:17–29). Because of the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit, which we looked at earlier, sin will at times enter the believer’s life. Sin

manifests itself in thoughts, words, and actions. It is essential that the child of God learn how to deal with sin in his life. A preoccupation with our own personal holiness may, in fact, lead to denying the presence of sin, attempting to cover it up, or explaining it away as just a “mistake.” Such action is fatal to the spiritual life. Because of this, it is important that we understand the three cleansings of the spiritual life:

a. The cleansing of salvation

Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word. (Eph. 5:25b–26)

This is a once for all cleansing that sets us apart from the world for eternal life. We are forgiven all sins (past, present, and future) for all time. This cleansing never needs to be—or can be—repeated. “*We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*” (Heb. 10:10). This is the “bath” which Jesus refers to in John 13:10 that needs no repetition. “*You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.*” (John 15:3).

b. The cleansing of confession

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

The goal of God for the believer is to avoid sin. However, as we continue in this battle (see Rom. 7:14–24), we will still commit sin as long as we are alive. Because Christ paid for all sins on the cross, the issue is no longer salvation but living in fellowship with God. This is the reason John wrote this epistle—that we might experience the joy of fellowship with God (1 John 1:3, 4). Sin breaks fellowship with God, grieves His Spirit, and stops our fruitfulness for Christ. We are cut off

from His peace and power. By our sin, we have denied Him. Confession is to agree with God about our sin. The word “*confess*” means to “say the same thing.”

John wants us to know four things about open and honest confession to God. First, He is “*faithful*,” meaning He will always respond in exactly the same way. He will forgive just as freely the thousandth time as He does the first time (cf. Matt. 18:21–22). Second, He is right or “*just*” to do this because Jesus already paid for that sin at the cross. He does not compromise His holiness in forgiving us. Third, He will completely forgive the sins we confess to Him. Fourth and finally, He will even forgive sins we have committed and may have forgotten (“*all unrighteousness*”).

All true confession leads to correction. When the prodigal son “*came to himself*,” he said, “*I will arise and go to my father*.” When he arrived, he declared, “*Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight*” (Luke 15:17–21). This is why we are warned, “*He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy*” (Prov. 28:13). By prompt confession of our sins to God, we are not only restored to absolute purity but also to joy, peace, and usefulness (Ps. 51:7–13).

A final consideration of the benefit of confession is that it will deliver us from further divine discipline (1 Cor. 11:31).

c. The cleansing of sustained fellowship

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

The cleansing of sustained fellowship through obedience to His Word is a cleansing that keeps us *from* sin. It is a preventive cleansing. We are kept clean by the enabling power

of the Holy Spirit to obey His Word. This is walking by faith. It is by maintaining fellowship with God, using confession when needed, that we keep from grieving the Spirit of God.

2. Quench not the Spirit.

Do not quench the Spirit.

(1 Thess. 5:19)

The word “*quench*” pictures the “putting out of a fire.” This can be done by one of two ways. First, we might smother the fire with dirt, or douse it with water. The other method is to simply let it burn out for lack of fuel. I think it is the second picture that best describes what Paul is talking about here. There is a difference between grieving and quenching the Spirit. As the previous context of Ephesians 4:17–29 suggested that “grieving” was done by allowing sin in our lives, so the context here suggests the cause of “quenching” the Spirit.

Beginning in 1 Thessalonians 5:11, we have a string of nineteen commands all the way through verse 22. These commands tell us the things we ought to do. However, failure to act on them is a sin of omission. In other words, the Holy Spirit is grieved when we **commit** sins, but He is quenched when we **omit** doing the things God’s Word commands. Omission is failing to feed the fire of His work in us. Apparently, Timothy was guilty of this when Paul charged him to “*stir up the gift of God which is in you*” (2 Tim.1:6). The word he uses means to “add fuel to a dying fire.” Therefore, it is important not only to confess sins when we commit them, but once restored to fellowship we must commit to obey the Word, lest we quench the Spirit by doing nothing! Too often we are eager to learn, but lazy to apply, the Word of God.

3. Walk in the Spirit.

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

(Gal. 5:16)

To “*walk in the Spirit*” means to live a life of dependence upon Him. He has been given to us for a purpose, to conform us to Christ. This requires faith on our part. Just as we have been saved “*by grace through faith*” (Eph. 2:8), so we are to live in the same way (Col. 2:6). Grace is God giving; faith is our receiving.

Paul prays two prayers in the book of Ephesians that illustrate how we are to depend on the Holy Spirit. His first prayer (Eph. 1:16–20) is a prayer for enlightenment. It is a prayer that, by the power of God’s Spirit, we may **know** the Truth. The second prayer (Eph. 3:14–21) is a prayer for enablement. It is a prayer that we might **do** (live) the things we have learned. As we must rely on the Spirit to **learn** the Word of God, we must also depend on Him to **live** what we learn. This moment-by-moment dependence on God’s Spirit is the walk of faith (2 Cor. 5:7).

To walk in the Spirit is to be led by the Spirit (Gal. 5:18), following His guidance in all things (John 16:13). Consistently living in this relationship of obedience to the Holy Spirit is the mark of spiritual maturity. “*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*” (Rom. 8:14). The word translated “*sons*” means “mature, adult sons.”

4. Be filled with the Spirit. We now come back to our original verse, Ephesians 5:18. Let me emphasize again that the word “*filled*,” in the original Greek text, is the same as “*full of*” in John 1:14 where it describes the completeness and wholeness of the life of Christ: “*full of grace and truth.*” His life was filled with a divine quality.

I would point out three things from this verse. First, we are commanded to be filled, but we must permit the filling to take place. Second, the One who does the filling is the Holy Spirit. It is His primary purpose to flood our life with the life of Christ. He alone can live the Christ-life through us. Third, we must deal with a misconception. Many read this passage and conclude that the “content” of the filling is the Spirit Himself. In other words, we are

a vessel that is not full and the Spirit is going to fill us with Himself. A better translation would be, “be filled by means of the Spirit.” He is the **agent** doing the filling, not the **content** of the filling. When the Spirit indwells you, you have all of Him. If you are out of fellowship, a carnal Christian, you are still indwelt by the Spirit in His entirety. You do not have more of Him when you are “filled by means of the Spirit,” but you have more of what He has to offer. When we read of early believers being filled with the Spirit, it is often connected with words that describe the evidence of their filling. For example, they were “*filled with the Holy Spirit*” and “*utterance*” (Acts 2:4), “*faith and power*” (Acts 6:8), “*wisdom*” (Acts 6:10), “*guidance*” (Acts 16:7), and so on. What exactly does the Spirit want to fill us with? We will turn to this question in the next section.



Chapter 7

THE SUBSTANCE OF SPIRITUAL POWER

The True Test of Spirituality is the Fruit of the Spirit

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

(Gal. 5:22–23)

These nine qualities compose one “fruit.” These are the expression of the character of Christ. They describe what John meant when he said that Jesus was “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Remember that Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, “He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you” (John 16:14). The reason the Spirit reveals the Word to us is so that He might live it through us. Many scholars teach that this fruit involves a three-fold relationship:

1. Our relationship to God. It is in our relationship to the heavenly Father that the first three qualities apply. **LOVE** leads the way because it is by the love of God that we are saved and born into His family (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). Love is also a one-word summary of the nature of God (1 John 4:8, 16). The relationship of the believer to God is, above all, a love relationship (John 16:27; 1 John 3:1). This love is not like human love, which is primarily emotion based. The love of God is of a divine quality, and it is based on His righteousness and justice. This is to say that His love is based on what He has done through the cross of Christ. At the cross, God demonstrated His love for sinners, satisfied His righteous demand for the penalty of sin, and displayed His justice by including every sin and sinner. It is love that begins and permeates the list of graces. The evangelist, D. L. Moody, says,

“Joy is love exulting; peace is love in repose; longsuffering is love on trial; gentleness is love in society; goodness is love in action; faith is love on the battlefield; meekness is love at school; and temperance is love in training.”

Once we enter into a love relationship with the heavenly Father, we experience true **JOY**. The first thing we find is that joy is far superior to happiness. Happiness is based on circumstances, and circumstances can change. Joy is built on eternal realities, which remain the same. Joy looks to eternity and therefore can endure the trials and disappointments of this life. Joy sees things from God’s point of view. We are able to rejoice in our trials because we “*rejoice in the hope of the glory of God*” (Rom. 5:2–3; James 1:2).

Where there is joy, there will be **PEACE**. “*Having been justified by faith we have peace with God.*” (Rom. 5:1). “*Peace with God*” means we are rightly related to Him as His child. It has to do with our position in Christ, which can never change. Then, the “*peace of God*” (Phil. 4:7) has to do with our practice. It is the result of faith and obedience to the Word of God. To live life without peace is a miserable existence. The soul without peace is like living a hell on earth. In a world filled with threats and fears, what could be more valuable than peace of soul? This is why Jesus put special emphasis on our need when He said to the disciples, “*These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*” (John 16:33).

2. Our relationship to others. Having a right relationship with God will ultimately affect our relationships with all those around us. We will begin to deal with others as Christ has dealt with us. Think of how **LONGSUFFERING** He has been toward you. When Paul writes of love, he says, “*Love suffers long, and is kind*” (1 Cor. 13:4). When you love sinful people, you will suffer; the stronger the love, the longer you will suffer. Longsuffering is the ability to endure the failures in others that we ourselves have

and to be patient as others fail or let us down again and again—just as God has done with us. Longsuffering is able to respond with kindness instead of frustration and anger.

KINDNESS is the outworking of a gracious attitude. Kindness is best exhibited in a forgiving spirit. “*And be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you*” (Eph. 4:32). Kindness involves a gracious consideration of the plight of others. It chooses to put others in the best possible light—to give them the benefit of the doubt. In reading the Gospels, we are struck with the astounding kindness of Jesus toward sinful men and women. When he looked at the woman at the well (John 4), He saw not a shameful person, but a person overwhelmed by shame. He saw her five broken marriages, broken heart, and devastated dreams. He saw past her life and right into her heart. So unexpected was His kindness that she was immediately suspicious. She was not used to being treated with kindness. Neither are many people that you and I pass every day. Let the Spirit live out the kindness of Christ in you!

Where kindness primarily denotes a motive, **GOODNESS** speaks of action. We can so often do a “good deed” that is not really good at all. We may do it with hidden motives or for a return of some kind. However, the goodness spoken of here is taking action with the highest and purest of motives and with the greatest good of others in mind. The highest good is always spiritual in nature. This goodness is related to eternity because the life of Christ *is* the greatest good. Jesus is the “*Good Shepherd*” (John 10:11). As such, He lays down His life for His sheep. Out of the goodness of His nature comes the goodness of His work. He sacrificed Himself on the cross out of the motivation of love and for our eternal good. He has left us the command to “*do good to those who hate you*” (Matt. 5:44). This is the test of true goodness, the kind that is worthy of Jesus Christ.

3. Our relationship to self. The last trio of virtues reveals the inner change that results from our relationship with Christ and

submission to His Spirit. These three show our personal relationship to God's Word, His will, and His work. It is first and foremost to His Word that **FAITHFULNESS** applies. We might say that faithfulness implies that we keep on believing. Faithful living is simply living by faith. None of us are as consistent as we would like to believe. Remember, it was "James the Just" who went on record saying, "*For we all stumble in many ways*" (James 3:2). If you consider the men and women recorded in the Hebrews 11 "Hall of Faith," you will find a rogues' gallery. But God called them "*faithful,*" men and women "*of whom the world was not worthy*" (Heb. 11:38). The consistency of their lives, in spite of their many failures, came from their faith in Him who is faithful (Heb. 11:11).

The first need of our spiritual life is to maintain faith. This is the first, the greatest, and the longest battle of the believer. The power comes from the Spirit of God, both to believe and to live out that faith. Of Jesus we read: "*Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God*" (Heb. 2:17). Isn't it amazing that in order to become a faithful High Priest, Jesus had to be made weak? He had to be made like us, with all our limitations, yet without sin. Even so, those who seek faithfulness through the Spirit's ministry will find that He makes us weak, that we might become strong in faithfulness. Paul boasted in his weaknesses, for through them the power of Christ rested on him (2 Cor. 12:9–10). It is always true that God's heroes are made strong out of their weakness (Heb. 11:34). Faithfulness relates to the **Word** of God.

With faithfulness, the Spirit produces **GENTLENESS**. This is a much-misunderstood word. Often translated "meekness," many have assumed this is a weakness. We think of it as being "meek and mild." Jesus said of Himself, "*I am gentle [meek] and lowly in heart*" (Matt. 11:29). In the ancient world, the word meant "power under control." It was used of the Greek war horse when all his magnificent strength was brought under the control of a touch or word from his rider. This is a perfect picture of what God wants to

produce in us. We have been given His power through the indwelling Spirit. Gentleness is the quality of being totally under His command. We become an “*instrument* [weapon] of *righteousness*” (Rom. 6:13) in the hands of God’s Spirit. He wields us with all His power to make a difference in the lives and world around us. It is the absolute and unconditional surrender to the **will** of God.

Finally, we have **SELF-CONTROL**. This has to do with the **work** of God. “*Self-control*” is really a poor translation. The word used here means “inner-rule.” It is the Spirit within who rules in the spiritual believer’s life through the Word of God. It is pictured as putting Christ on the throne of your life. “*But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts*” (1 Pet. 3:15). It is not that we control ourselves, but rather that we deny self any right to our life (Luke 9:23). We turn control of our life over to the Lord of our life. I think this is what Paul had in mind when he said, “*For the love of Christ compels us...*” and “*He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again*” (2 Cor. 5:14–15).

Every believer has a work to accomplish (1 Cor. 12:4–7). It is Christ’s controlling through the indwelling Spirit that makes possible the completion of that work. Once we are filled with the essence or substance of spiritual power—by the power of the Spirit—we are then prepared for the service to which we are called.



Chapter 8

THE SERVICE OF SPIRITUAL POWER (PART 1)

The Priest, the Offering, and the Altar of Spiritual Service

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Rom.12:1–2)

The believer is to be a “*living sacrifice*” to God. We are to make our offering every day, just as did the priests of Old Testament days. The difference is that we are a sacrifice that lives. We (our old, sinful natures) were co-crucified with Christ on the cross (Rom. 6:6, Gal. 2:20). When we were united with Him by the power of the Holy Spirit, we were united with His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:4, 5). Now we can offer our very lives in the resurrection life of Christ Himself. To be a “*living sacrifice*” requires that we claim three provisions of God’s grace. First, we can present ourselves only on the altar of the mercies of God. That means that it is totally a “by grace through faith” offering. Second, this offering involves a process of transformation made possible only by the “*renewing of the mind.*” Finally, this offering, though living, involves a death. It is in the death of self-will that we might prove the eternal perfection of the will of God. In these three things, we have “The Priest, The Offering, and The Altar”:

1. The Priest. In urging us to offer ourselves to God, Paul says that this is “*our reasonable service*” (Rom. 12:1). Some

translations add the word “worship” here. Actually, the word that is used here in the original language means “priestly service.” It is connected to the word “*present*,” which is the word for “making an offering.” Therefore, the picture is of a priest making an offering as an act of worship.

The first time “worship” appears as a word in the Bible is in the story of Abraham offering up his son Isaac (Gen. 22). In that story, Abraham is told by God to offer up the “*son of the promise*.” Isaac, who by then was a grown man, submits to the will of his Father, and is laid on the altar of sacrifice. Abraham offered up to God not only his son, but his very heart and hope for the coming Savior.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called,’ concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figure. (Heb.11:17–19)

This is a beautiful story of a faith that produces “*hope against hope*” (Rom. 4:18). It is also prophetic of what God the Father would one day do for us in sacrificing His only begotten Son in our place (John 3:16; Rom. 5:6, 8). In addition, as “*the father of all those who believe*” (Rom. 4:11–12; Gal. 3:7), Abraham was anticipating a great truth for all who live after the cross. The Bible teaches that every believer living in the Church Age is a priest (1 Pet. 2:5–9). We do not need any other mediator between us and the heavenly Father than Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 9:15). We can come directly and boldly to God in every “*time of need*” (Heb. 4:15–16). The priests of Old Testament times washed themselves at the laver of cleansing every day before offering service to God (Ex. 30:17–21). As New Testament priests, we also must cleanse ourselves daily using the water of God’s Word and the confession of our sins (Eph. 5:26; 1 John 1:9; Heb. 10:19–22). We are then prepared to make our offering, to “*present [our] bodies a living*

sacrifice.” Only after the priest has been cleansed is his offering—his act of worship to God—acceptable in God’s sight.

2. The Offering. In Old Testament times, a lamb was offered every morning and every evening (Ex. 29:39). The morning offering was made at nine o’clock, and the evening offering at “*twilight*,” which means “between the evenings.” This was three o’clock in the afternoon. We can see here that God was teaching Israel to look forward to the coming “*Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). At the crucifixion, Jesus hung on the cross during this six-hour period, from day until night (Ps. 22:2). Our Lord declared that if anyone desires to follow Him as a true disciple, he must “*deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me*” (Luke 9:23). Therefore, we are to offer ourselves to God as “*living sacrifices.*” Our daily prayer must be, “*Not my will, but Yours, be done*” (Luke 22:42). The offering of our life means that we are not our own (1 Cor. 6:19–20). We are no longer to live for ourselves, but for Christ (2 Cor. 5:15). The sacrifices and offerings He wants us to bring are within the reach of each one of us!

Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name, but do not forget to do good and share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

(Heb. 13:15–16)

When we cleanse ourselves daily through confession and offer our lives to God in surrender to His will, He will receive that offering as “*holy, acceptable to God.*” This idea of self-offering in Romans 12 comes from the earlier reference found in Romans 6:12–14. We are to present our members—eyes, ears, mouth, hands feet, heart, and mind, *all* of ourselves—as instruments of righteousness. If we are only the instruments (the Greek word means “weapons”), then who is wielding the instrument? The answer is the Holy Spirit. We have placed ourselves into His hands to do the work of God in and through our lives. We have become a

servant of His spiritual power. We, as believers, are the priest and the offering, but the altar is totally of God.

3. The Altar. In ancient times, God gave very clear instructions about the altar on which sacrifices were to be made to Him.

An altar of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I record My name I will come to you, and I will bless you. And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone; for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it. Nor shall you go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed on it. (Ex. 20:24–26)

The altar was to have no human craft or art involved. Man was not to attempt to improve or beautify what God had made, earth or stone. Neither was man to seek to climb up to God. In all these things, God is making clear that coming to Him can involve no human works of any kind. The altar must speak of grace alone. The sacrifice speaks of death, “*the wages of sin*” (Rom. 6:23). That is all we deserve and that is what Christ has suffered in our place. However, the altar speaks of God, of His provision for man by what He has done. We cannot improve the work of God through Christ on the cross. We cannot add to it in any way. None of our merit, none of our good deeds, none of our works of beauty can add to the cross of Christ. In fact, the minute we add our works to the cross, we no longer have either grace or faith.

And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work. (Rom. 11:6)

The great error of all man-made religion is that it teaches man to do something to make himself acceptable to God. All religions

on earth agree on this one point: you must work to earn a right standing before God. Whenever Christians believe in the idea that they are saved by grace but *kept* saved by works, they have fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4; Heb.12:15). They are still saved, but they cannot possibly live the spiritual life, for the spiritual life—like eternal life—is “*by grace through faith*” (Eph. 2:8). We are to live the spiritual life on the same basis that we received eternal life (Col. 2:6). We must not defile the altar of God!

*We have an altar from which those who serve the
tabernacle have no right to eat.* (Heb. 13:10)

The altar of which the author speaks is the cross of Jesus Christ. It was wholly a work of God the Father. There, like Abraham, God offered His only begotten Son. However, unlike Isaac, Jesus actually had to die and rise again from the dead to provide eternal life for all who will believe. The cross was not beautiful. There were no human works added to what He did for us. He left no room for man to climb up to God. It was God’s altar and it could not be improved in any way.

*Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people
with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.
Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp,
bearing His reproach.* (Heb. 13:12–13)

The world still hates Jesus. His cross is an offence to mankind. It declares that all have sinned. It reveals that the wages of sin is death. The cross sends a clear message that no work of man—however clever, or nice, or beautiful—can provide salvation or even play the smallest part in it. When we believe in Jesus Christ, we have acknowledged that this world is doomed. We will be hated along with Him. And if we are committed to live the spiritual life, to live in the power of the Spirit of God, we will earn the persecution of the devil’s kingdom (Matt. 5:10–12; 2 Tim. 3:12). It should not surprise us that this persecution will often be most cruel from other children of God. Though they have trusted Christ as

Savior, they have afterward turned to a life of works as a substitute for the true spiritual life. They live by works and not by faith. The way of grace and faith is an offence to them. They believe they earn God's blessing. They think that God owes them for their merits. Therefore, they will hate the believer who lives in the freedom of faith. This is what happened to the Galatian church. This was the cause of the divisions and dissension in the Corinthian church. Moreover, this has been the struggle of the Church throughout her history. It is a history of the struggle between the flesh and the spirit working out in the body of Christ. The Scripture is very clear:

“Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” (Heb. 10:38)

Let each of us search the Scriptures, as well as our own souls, lest we who have found eternal life *“by grace through faith”* should fall short of abundant life by turning from faith to works. May God deliver us from such error!



Chapter 9

THE SERVICE OF SPIRITUAL POWER (PART 2) *Identification and Development of Our Spiritual Gifts*

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. (1 Cor. 12:4-7)

In 1 Corinthians 12:1, Paul says, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant.” The word “gifts” does not occur in the original Greek text, so that what Paul is speaking of is “spiritual things,” or “spirituality.” His point, which he develops over the next four chapters, is that true biblical spirituality involves effective service (Ch. 12, 14), genuine love (Ch. 13), and resurrection life (Ch. 15).

In the passage quoted above, three great truths are presented:

- 1) Every child of God has been spiritually gifted for service.
- 2) Every gift has a related ministry that is expected to produce results.
- 3) Every ministry involves the working of the entire Trinity: Father, Son, and Spirit.

We will consider each of these truths as a basis for a study on spiritual gifts.

EVERY BELIEVER HAS A SPIRITUAL GIFT

When the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in the new believer, He brings a spiritual gift. This is one of the five works He performs at salvation, which we saw earlier in chapter two. This gift is given from God to the believer, but it is for service back to God. This service is to be offered to God through ministry to the Church, the Body of Christ. There are several passages of Scripture that stress the giftedness of every believer.

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them. (Rom. 12:6)

As we do not all have the same gift, it is essential that we use the gift that God has given us. We need to beware of attempting to imitate the ministry of another believer, for we may not be gifted in the same area. Let us seek to know our own gift and to bear our own responsibility before God (Gal. 6:5).

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. (Eph. 4:7)

Even among those who have the same gift (such as pastors, evangelists, or those with the gift of giving or serving), there will be differences. They will not all have the gift in the same “*measure*.” Some will have large ministries, some small. This is not important. What is important is that we are faithful in our own part of the Lord’s harvest field. Some will be strong in one way; others will be strong in another way. We cannot compare gifts among believers. Each of us must stand or fall by how well we serve in the way God has planned for us (Rom. 14:10).

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Pet. 4:10)

All of these passages tell us that every believer has a spiritual gift. Additionally, if we are gifted, then we also have a ministry to other believers. Spiritual gifts are to be used to build up the Body of Christ and make it strong. Every believer therefore should be actively involved in a local church. As Jesus said to Peter after predicting his denial, “*When you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren*” (Luke 22:32).

EVERY GIFT INVOLVES A MINISTRY

As Peter said in 1 Peter 4:10, “*minister it to one another.*” Each believer has something other believers need. We are not to withhold that supply. God designed the Church so that each member must rely on the others. Every child of God is a minister. In fact, we have a two-fold ministry. We are to minister to the unsaved as a servant of the Gospel—“*Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation*” (2 Cor. 5:18). To these unbelievers, we minister the message of salvation. To other believers, we minister to build up the faith they have in Christ.

For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

(Rom. 11:29)

Our gift determines our ministry. Our ministry is our life calling. Each of us has a purpose to fulfill in our life. That purpose is spiritual and has eternal results. When we give an account to the Lord for our life, He will not ask us how we think our fellow believers have done. He will ask one question: “What have you done with what I gave you” (Luke 19:15). As we can illustrate from the parables our Lord used to teach His disciples, He has given “*to each his own work*” (Mark 13:34) and “*to each according to his own ability*” (Matt. 25:15). We ought not to worry about how well others are doing in their service to God, but we should diligently depend on the Holy Spirit to enable us to fulfill our own ministry. “*Who are you to judge another’s servant? To*

his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand” (Rom. 14:4). We will do well if we see to it that we are able to stand before Him!

EVERY MINISTRY IS A WORK OF THE TRINITY

As an example to the Church of how we ought to function, Paul refers to the harmonious working of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit gives the gift and enables us for ministry. Then we serve under the authority of the Lord Jesus, who has been raised and seated in all power over the Church (Eph. 1:22–23). The results of our work come from God the Father. Paul says to the Corinthians, *“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase”* (1 Cor. 3:6). We can see each member of the Godhead active in and through the indwelling power of the Spirit (see Rom. 8:9–11).

As each member of the Trinity plays a different role, yet all work together in harmony, so it should be with believers. There is no place for competition or envy of the ministry God has given to another. Jesus made this very clear to Peter after He restored him to service. Peter was told to follow the Lord but wanted to know what John was to do. Jesus said, *“If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me”* (John 21:22). In effect, Jesus was saying, *“If I want his ministry to last for thousands of years, it is not your concern. You do what I have given you to do!”* What we have established is that each believer has a gift. That gift will work out in a ministry. In fact, the entire Godhead will work through us for the results. This is what Paul means when he says, *“For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure”* (Phil. 2:13). This brings us to consider some questions that every child of God should answer:

- 1) What is my own spiritual gift? How can I find the gift I have been given?
- 2) Once I know my gift, how can I develop the use of it?

- 3) If my gift is to be used for others, of what benefit is it to me?

These crucial questions must be answered both biblically and practically.

HOW CAN I FIND MY GIFT?

To answer this question, we must take at least three steps of spiritual growth. First, we must engage God in **prayer**, asking Him to reveal our gift to us. Second, we must devote ourselves to diligent Bible study to **learn** all we can about the various gifts. Third, we must begin to **serve** in whatever areas are open to us, looking for God's guidance and seal of approval in the area He has gifted us.

1. Pray for God to reveal your gift. We begin with prayer because God desires us to know His will for our life. He knows the gift we have been given and only He can reveal it to us. Prayer expresses our desire to discover His will. *"If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God"* (John 7:17). What our Lord gave as a way for the people of His day to know and understand His teaching is just as true for us today. God reveals His will through His Word. However, He only reveals His Word to those who desire to do it. The desire to obey is the key to knowing. This is why we should not decide which gift we want and then try to make it ours. God alone determines the giving of gifts (see 1 Cor. 12:11, 18). We do not choose our gift; God chooses it for us. Someone may then ask what God means in 1 Corinthians 12:31, *"But earnestly desire the best gifts."* This statement is not made to individuals but to the whole Church. He is telling the Corinthian church that they are promoting the use of the lesser gifts while ignoring the greater gifts (see 1 Cor. 14:5b). We need to be humble enough to submit to God and to pray for His will for our service to be revealed to us.

2. Learn about the gifts. Next, we need to learn about the individual spiritual gifts. The better informed we are, the easier it is to identify our gift. The study of the passages that list the gifts (Rom. 12:3–8; 1 Cor. 12:27–31; Eph. 4:11–12; 1 Pet. 4:10–11), along with their contexts, will reveal at least five truths to us:

- 1) Some gifts are temporary, while others are permanent.
- 2) All gifts fall into two categories: speaking and ministering.
- 3) Some gifts are given prominence over others.
- 4) It is possible to misuse spiritual gifts.
- 5) Love is the key to proper use of all gifts.

We will look briefly at each of these points, and I would encourage every believer to pray effectively and study diligently concerning these truths.

Temporary Gifts v. Permanent Gifts

Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.
(1 Cor. 13:8)

This is a very sensitive passage for many believers today. There are many different ways it has been applied and taught. Nevertheless, there are certain truths that cannot be denied in what Paul says here. First, it cannot be denied that after giving a long list of various gifts (1 Cor. 12:27–29), Paul singles out three that he distinguishes from others as “vanishing away.” We must admit from this that some gifts were to continue after these three had passed from the scene.

Second, it is clear that Paul has in mind a point in time when these gifts will cease. It is “*when that which is perfect has come*” (1 Cor. 13:10). Many speak of this as the second coming of Christ. However, the Old Testament prophets saw His second advent as the time when these gifts will first be given to Israel, not the

Church (Joel 2:28–32). Peter’s use of this passage in Acts 2:17–21 does not change the fact that all those present were Jews or proselytes to Judaism (Acts 2:5–11). The context of 1 Corinthians 13:9 and 10 requires that the “*perfect*,” or “*complete*,” of verse 10 is the sum total of the “*parts*” of verse 9. Since Paul is speaking about the writing of Scripture by the various authors, it would appear that he is talking about the completion of the Scripture. Before the Bible was finished, there was the need to have “*sign*” gifts to verify the true Apostles (see 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:4; c.f. Rev. 2:2) and to present New Testament truth, which had not yet been recorded. In his illustration of the change from childhood to adulthood (1 Cor. 13:11), Paul is surely speaking of the gradual maturity of the Church—that it would grow out of its infancy. The figure of the “*mirror*” (verse 12) is a common picture of the Bible (2 Cor. 3:18; James 1:23–25). He appears to be saying that at the time of writing this epistle, the mirror was dim because it was still “*in part*” (1 Cor. 13:9). When it became completely whole, we would see “*face to face*,” an Old Testament term for how God spoke to Moses (Num. 12:8).

Third, and most importantly, Paul declares in 1 Corinthians that the only God-given motive for the use of gifts is love. It is “*the more excellent way*” (12:31), the only way that “*never fails*” (13:8), and the only motive which puts the edification of others over self-promotion (see 8:1 with 14:12). We do not have space here to deal with specific gifts, or to present all arguments. It is sufficient to say that we must deal with the fact that some gifts are temporary, and it would not be wise to consider these in seeking to know our own. Ultimately, each believer must answer to the Lord as to how well he understands and does the will of God.

Speaking v. Ministering

There are two passages that divide gifts into these two categories:

And He Himself gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. (Eph. 4:11–12)

If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

(1 Pet. 4:11)

It is my conviction that apostles and prophets have passed from the scene. Their gifts were primarily given to receive and record Scripture (Eph. 2:20; 3:5). With the completion of the written Word of God, there remains no need for revelation gifts. Apostles were the early missionaries, and prophets, the early teachers. Evangelists, pastors, and teachers accomplish those tasks today. The obvious point, however, is that the gifts of communicating the Word of God are given to equip the saints to serve. Some speak, others serve. This is clearly seen by reading Acts 6:2: “*It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.*” The task of the apostles was speaking. They would have been ignoring their gift and intruding into the ministries of other gifts if they were to distribute the daily portion of bread to the poor. We must all understand the importance of identifying our gift and staying in our place of service. Speaking or teaching gifts are to deal with “*the oracles of God,*” meaning “with scripture.” As Paul said to Timothy, we are to “*preach the word*” and “*fulfill your ministry*” (2 Tim. 4:2, 5b). Where the Word is faithfully taught, believers will grow up in their faith and be prepared to serve in the area of their own gift.

Some are Greater Gifts than Others

In 1 Corinthians 12:28, Paul begins a list of gifts according to their importance. “Apostles” and “teachers” are first. “Tongues”

and “interpretation” are last. Then he says to the Church as a body: “*earnestly desire the best gifts*” (v. 31). The word “*best*” is a comparative word meaning “greater by comparison.” Then again, in chapter 14:3–5, he contrasts the benefit of the one who teaches the Word with one who speaks in tongues. If we accept “*the more excellent way*” of love, and if love is most concerned with building others up (1 Cor. 8:1), then any gift that builds up others is far superior to any gift that builds up self. This is the essence of Paul’s argument. Paul says that the true test of importance of gifts is to “*let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel*” (1 Cor. 14:12). How much greater is teaching than something like speaking in tongues? About ten thousand times more important (1 Cor. 14:19)! One of the reasons for this and the basis for Paul’s teaching about tongues in chapter 14, is that according to Isaiah 28:11–13, the gift of tongues was a specific sign to Israel. It was to verify that their Messiah had come and to warn of the awful consequences of their national rejection of Him. This is why Paul says, “*Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers*” (v. 22). We must recognize that God gives the place of prominence to the gifts that teach the Word of God. The Church should seek to magnify the proper exercise of those gifts and not the men who have them!

The Misuse of Spiritual Gifts

It is a fact that all of our spiritual provisions may be misused. For example: “*For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another*” (Gal. 5:13). It is only when genuine spiritual love dominates that we will use our gifts correctly. This is because love motivates only when we are “filled with the Spirit,” and “walking in the Spirit.” It is only by fellowship with God that we keep from taking our Father’s blessings and misusing them, as the prodigal son did. The entire section of 1 Corinthians 12–14 is written to correct the abuse of spiritual gifts, specifically the abuse of tongues. Since this is such a hot issue today, we should inquire

how we can determine the proper use of spiritual gifts in the church. These seven things stand out as guidelines:

- 1) There should be no sense of superiority or inferiority (12:15–21).
- 2) There should be honor given to each member (12:22–26).
- 3) Gifts that present the Word should be given prominence because the Word of God is our priority (12:31; 14:1–5). The term “*prophecies*” here incorporates all speaking gifts that edify the Church.
- 4) All ministries should be motivated by spiritual love (13:1–13; 14:12).
- 5) The goal should be the edification of others (14:12, 26).
- 6) All things should be done in an orderly, respectful way (14:26, 31, 33–40).
- 7) Tongues are not to be spoken without interpretation and with not more than two or three speaking (14:27–28).

These biblical standards should be used to “*test the spirits, whether they are of God*” (1 John 4:1). Where these principles are ignored, at the very least we have carnality and an abuse of spiritual gifts! At the worst, we may be dealing with spirits not of God at all (Col. 2:8, 18–19, 23; 1 John 4:1).

Love: the Only True Motivation

The Apostle does a masterful and poetic job of demonstrating the futility of all service apart from the motivating love of the Spirit (1 Cor. 13:1–3, 4–8). It is possible that one would even submit to martyrdom for self-glorification. His stern conclusion is that anything done apart from the fruit of the Spirit is “*nothing*.” The word means “*absolutely zero!*” This means that no true ministry nor genuine edification of others has taken place; ultimately, therefore, there is no eternal reward in the end. It will all be “*wood, hay, straw*” at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:12–15). Since each of us is gifted, we each have the duty and

responsibility to be sure that what we do is in the energy of the Holy Spirit—“*the ability which God supplies*” (1 Pet. 4:11).

Having made finding our gift a matter of prayer and learning all we can about gifts, we then need to get involved in service.

3. Serve wherever possible. When I was a young Bible college student, my pastor, John Miller, was teaching about spiritual gifts. I approached him after Bible class one night and asked, “How can I know my spiritual gift?” His answer was, “The best way to find your gift is to do it.” When we begin to serve in all areas, our gift will soon emerge. In other words, if we fulfill the general responsibilities given to all believers (Bible study, prayer, witnessing, giving, helping), we will grow to see our specific area of gifting. We will see that God brings great results in some areas, and not in others. Often, others will notice that we are effective in certain areas, and they will encourage us about what they see. If, for example, we try teaching and no one is blessed, that may not be our area. If we are attempting to teach and people keep coming to Jesus Christ in faith, our gift may be evangelism. If we just enjoy being in the background and helping in various areas, our gift may be the gift of helps. This is actually one of the most useful of gifts. It goes without saying that while we are not all evangelists, we should all be witnesses for Christ. Though we are not all gifted in giving, we should all give. Though we are not all teachers, we all should be willing to teach what we know to others.

Often, as we give ourselves to service, God will open doors of opportunity to us. We may be nervous about stepping into those positions. Early in my Christian life, I knew God had a service for me to perform for Him, but I didn’t know what it was. I had no desire to be a pastor, but teaching opportunities kept coming up. I took those opportunities, not because I felt gifted in that area, but because there was a need that was not being filled. Other students preparing for pastoral ministry turned down many of these opportunities because they were in nursing homes, or homes for disabled children, or at rescue missions in the inner city. There was

nothing exciting about serving in those places. I have since learned that while all true ministry is glorious, not much of it is glamorous. It is hard work, often without much recognition. By making myself available, God was able to work to let me see my own gift emerge and take shape. It is always good to remember that God does not need our ability. What He asks for is our *availability*.

HOW CAN I DEVELOP MY GIFT?

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.
(1 Pet. 4:10)

Gifts are given at salvation, but they develop through use. Additionally, since they are personal gifts, they develop as the person possessing them grows. Two things will develop both the person and the gift: **growing** and **servicing**. We have to take care of our own spiritual growth if we are to help in the growth of others. Not only do we minister to others by our gift, but also by our example.

Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.
(1 Tim. 4:15–16)

In these verses, we see three things that will help develop both the individual and the gift. First, there is surrender. Timothy's commitment was not to be partial but total. Our ministry demands that we offer ourselves to God as "*living sacrifices*" (Rom. 12:1). Second, Timothy was to be an example of spiritual progress. He was to continue to grow up in his own faith and demonstrate the fruit of true spirituality. There will never come a time when we can stop growing spiritually! Third, Timothy was to maintain his focus. Paul exhorted him to watch not only his teaching but also his

actions—not only his public ministry, but also his private, personal life. Spiritual growth is normal and natural when we maintain fellowship with God by living a life of prayer, study, and obedience. As we grow and serve, our gift will develop along the lines that God has planned for us. In the process, we will become the person God designed us to be.

WHAT BENEFIT IS MY GIFT TO ME?

“Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.” (Matt. 25:21)

If all our efforts to serve are for the edification and blessing of others, what do *we* get out of it? In what way do we find fulfillment in our service? Certainly, we have the peace of a clear conscience. We also have the joy of blessing others. However, God has not left us out. We also benefit from the gifts of our fellow believers. Others will be serving us. Where gifts are being rightly used, there will be a bond among those members who are working together. God will give blessing for obedience. He will display His faithfulness to us in more ways than we can imagine. We will know the special security that comes from having a sense of destiny for our lives. Jesus has promised that whatever we may lose for His sake, we can expect back a hundredfold, both in this life and the one to come (Mark 10:29–30).

The Bible hints at many kinds of eternal rewards. We are not told everything we might like to know about these rewards. For now, it is sufficient to say that God is faithful, and He will repay according to our faithfulness. Isn't it amazing that Jesus Christ died on the cross to save us; God the Holy Spirit works through us in service; then God the Father rewards us for allowing Him to do it all? While we cannot do a full study of rewards at this time, let us look quickly at the five *eternal* crowns promised in the New Testament:

1. The Imperishable Crown – 1 Corinthians 9:24–27. This is the crown given for spiritual self-discipline for the sake of our ministry. Paul watched himself in all things so as not to be “*disqualified.*” This refers not to loss of salvation (which is not biblical) but to loss of potential reward through spiritual carelessness.

2. The Crown of Joy – Philippians 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:19. This is the crown for faithful witnessing—winning others to eternal life by faith in Christ. A great part of the joy here is that they will be with you forever in heaven. In this crown, Jesus shares with faithful witnesses the joy that sustained Him on the cross (Heb. 12:2). This was the joy of knowing that His sufferings would “[bring] *many sons to glory*” (Heb. 2:10).

3. The Crown of Life – James 1:12; Revelation 2:10. For all who are faithful to endure their sufferings and trials in this life, there is a special crown. It is the crown of life. We cannot say what the details of all this will involve, except that heaven will more than reward those who have not just suffered, but have suffered in faith.

4. The Crown of Righteousness – 2 Timothy 4:8. Paul says that this crown was one he especially anticipated. However, it is not for him alone but for all who live in the expectancy of Christ’s return. This is for living life in light of eternity. What a difference it can make in our daily life to remember that His return could come today!

5. The Crown of Glory – 1 Peter 5:4. This crown is often called the “minister’s crown.” Certainly, the context is dealing with the “*elders,*” who are to “*shepherd the flock*” (1 Pet. 5:1, 2). With this crown, Jesus, the Chief Shepherd, shares His glory with those who have been faithful to lead, feed, and care for His flock.

These crowns are only a small part of the study of eternal rewards. If we are faithful to endure in this life (2 Tim. 2:12), there

exists for each believer the potential of reigning with Christ. It is just as certain that unfaithfulness can cause us to lose those rewards (1 Cor. 9:27; 2 Tim. 2:12b). Both of these passages, which are often cited to prove loss of salvation, are, in fact, speaking of the loss of eternal reward. This loss is pictured graphically in 1 Corinthians 3:15 as one who is delivered from a burning house and loses everything but his life. The prospect of gaining eternal rewards gives us strong encouragement to identify our gift and serve faithfully. The warning against losing them should produce in us a caution not to ignore our gift and calling!



Chapter 10

A SUMMARY OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Spiritual Power is Provided for Spiritual Living

But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. (1 John 2:5–6)

These verses summarize what the spiritual life involves in three word pictures: a dwelling place, a journey, and a goal achieved. We might say, “a man at home, in the street, and in himself.”

1. The Dwelling Place. John begins with our spiritual place of residence. We need to establish a spiritual address. “*He who says he abides in Him*” is a believer who says he is living in fellowship with God. The word “abide” means “to have a continual place of residence in Him,” that is in “*fellowship*” as we saw in 1 John 1:7. This is a very ancient picture of living by faith, going all the way back to Moses.

The eternal God is your refuge [dwelling place], and underneath are the everlasting arms. (Deut. 33:27)

The children of Israel had been through forty years in the wilderness. Now they were preparing to enter the Promised Land. Moses reminds them that those who live by faith are not of this earth. We cannot ever look to this world as our permanent home.

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. (Ps. 90:1)

This Psalm was also written by Moses. He stresses the same truth, and later in verse 12, indicates what he means: *“So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”* The way to “dwell in Him” is to gain His wisdom daily by seeking it in His Word. To “live in the Word” is to live a life of fellowship under God’s special care.

We see this reinforced in Psalm 91:1: *“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust’.”* This Psalm may actually be a continuation of Psalm 90. Notice that after giving assurance of God’s protection to the believer in fellowship (vv. 3–8), he gives the reason: *“Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling”* (vv. 9–10).

Jesus used these word pictures of Moses in His teaching to the disciples and applied to Himself the place Moses gave to the Most High God.

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed in Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free...Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” (John 8:31–32, 36)

In this verse, He introduces the idea previously recorded by Moses that to abide in the Lord is to abide in His Word. You cannot separate the living Word from the written Word! Then, in His last message to the disciples before the crucifixion, Jesus returns to this theme.

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me...If you abide in Me, and

*My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire,
and it shall be done for you.”* (John 15:4, 7)

Once again, we see that to “abide in Christ” is to make ourselves “at home” in His Word. As we fill our souls with His Word, the Word then becomes “at home” in us. Paul prays for spiritual enablement for the saints, asking of God: “*That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith ...*” (Eph. 3:16–17a). The word “*dwell*” is an intensified form meaning “to settle down and be at home.” Christ is “at home” where His Word has its rightful place.

Consider a similar passage: “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom*” (Col. 3:16a).

From these many passages, we see that the beginning of true spiritual life is fellowship with God through His Word. We are to be at home in His Word, and His Word is to be at home in us. Living in God’s Word is a daily necessity of biblical spiritual living.

2. The Journey. The two most common figures of the Christian life are **wayfaring** and **warfaring**. The walk and the war of the believer show us that we are on a journey and that we will have many battles before we reach our destination in heaven. As John says in 1 John 2:6, if we claim to have fellowship with God, then we “*ought to walk just as He walked.*” The walk of the believer speaks of his conduct in the world. We are “*in the world,*” but not “*of the world*” (John 17:15–16). The word translated “*ought*” speaks of an obligation. In other words, fellowship with God requires obedience (see 1 John 1:6, 8, 10). To “*walk as He walked*” means, as 1 John 2:5 tells us, that we keep His Word. If we are living in His Word and it is living in us, there will be obedience. Such obedience will then result in spiritual progress in our journey of faith.

“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him...If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make our home with him.” (John 14:21, 23)

Obedience to the Lord through His Word brings the believer into a deeper and closer relationship with Him. There is a greater love shared with God in the life of fellowship. Obedience results in a closer bond between the heavenly Father and His child. Enoch is an Old Testament example: *“Enoch walked with God three hundred years ... And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him”* (Gen. 5:22, 24).

The walk of the believer is a spiritual journey of discovery. Yes, we will stumble along the way. When we sin, we need to repent by confessing the sin and correcting our life immediately. The great believers are not those who do not fall but those who do not stay down.

For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again. (Prov. 24:16a)

This journey and its progress may be seen in the book of Ephesians. Paul says we are saved *“by grace through faith”* (2:8) so that we might:

- 1) Walk in good works (2:10)
- 2) Walk worthy (4:1)
- 3) Walk not like the world (4:17)
- 4) Walk in love (5:2)
- 5) Walk in light (5:8)
- 6) Walk in wisdom (5:15)

All of these are the result of the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit (5:18). Let us be sure we keep making good spiritual progress in the journey of faith!

REACHING THE GOAL

The goal of the spiritual life is to have “the love of God perfected” (1 John 2:5) in us. The word “perfect,” when used of Christians, does not mean “sinless.” Rather, it means “to become mature” or “complete” in growth. This is the same word Jesus screamed from the cross: “*It is finished*” (John 19:30). It was the victory cry of having finished the will of God for Him in providing our salvation. He had reached the goal. God also has a goal for us to attain. That goal is spiritual maturity and fruitfulness (John 15:5–8). If we daily “live in His Word,” and continue to make progress “walking by faith,” we will surely reach the goal He has set for us.

The great Apostle Paul had this in mind when he wrote: “*Not that I have already attained or am already perfect [finished or complete]; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*” (Phil. 3:12–14).

There are three things in what Paul says here that should be an encouragement to every believer. First, as long as we are in this life, we should continue to grow. Even when we reach maturity in our spiritual life, when “*the love of God is perfected*” in us in an obedient life, we must continue to grow. There are no perfect Christians, and those who think they are only deceive themselves (Gal. 6:3).

Second, we must learn to leave the past in the past. We need to forget past failures. If we habitually confess our sins to God, they are blotted out as far as He is concerned. He wipes them off our record (Ps. 32:1–2; 51:1–2, 9; Isa. 1:18). It is also good for us to forget our successes. We cannot live in light of past victories. We

will never keep pressing onward if we are looking behind us (Luke 9:62). Forget the past and keep moving forward to higher ground!

Finally, we should remember the prize. There are rewards for faithfulness. I am convinced that the smallest act of faith here in this world will not lack its reward in heaven. We have the word of Jesus Himself on this: “*And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward*” (Matt. 10:42). It is my prayer that your entrance into heaven will be rich (2 Pet. 1:11).

We began our study with Jesus’ promise of the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit. He compared it to “*rivers of living water*” flowing from within. We can now end our study with a similar picture given to the Prophet Jeremiah.

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit.” (Jer. 17:7–8)

The spiritual life is deeply rooted in the abundant supply of God’s grace. To live by faith is to draw on the resources of the Holy Spirit, an ever-flowing, never-ending river of living water. It is by the gracious work of the Holy Spirit that we are enabled to draw near to God for cleansing. Only by the power of the Spirit of God can our lives be more fruitful. As we increasingly yield to Him, He works in us the image of the living Christ. This is all because the chief work of the Spirit is to apply to us the benefits of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. May we all—as those redeemed by the love of the Father through the blood of the Lamb—permit the work of redemption to continue in our lives. It will be for our eternal benefit to learn that the secret to spiritual power is to be found not in struggle, but in surrender!

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Ministry Biography

GENE CUNNINGHAM has spent the past 30 years involved in pastoral ministry in North America and Australia. His recorded messages and books have spread around the world, opening doors for the growing missionary outreach of Basic Training Bible Ministries. While evangelism through the gospel of grace is paramount, the ministry has concurrently participated in the training of pastors and workers in remote regions of the world, where opportunities for basic preparation to teach the Word of God are virtually non-existent. Gene has been instrumental in establishing Bible schools in Africa, India and Papua New Guinea.

Nancy, Gene's wife, is his constant support and companion and holds classes for the pastors' wives, teaching the biblical perspective of their unique role in ministry. She has also developed Bible schools for children in both India and Papua New Guinea. These schools are rapidly growing, drawing thousands of students annually.

In May 2006, Gene and Nancy left Australia, after planting three local churches in ten years, to focus primarily on their first love—teaching indigenous pastors and workers. Their purpose is to train these native teachers to go forth with confidence, spreading the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ and helping their flocks to grow in grace. In addition, they will conduct missions training camps in North America and Australia to train others to do the same. The audio and publications division of Basic Training Bible Ministries continues as Gene and Nan remain involved in writing and in ministering to local groups and youth camps in both countries.

