

DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

Lesson 4

There is much confusion today about how the believer lives his life in the power of the Holy Spirit. Some say you need to ask for the anointing of the Spirit. Others pray to be filled with the Spirit. Still others hope to have a supernatural manifestation of one of the sign gifts to verify they are walking by the Spirit. What do the Scriptures teach? In this lesson we will explore what it means to “walk in the Spirit.” We will learn why walking in the Spirit is not an option for the Christian, how to walk in the Spirit, what causes us to stop walking in the Spirit, and how to get back to walking in the Spirit again. We will also examine some misconceptions and the practical application of this fundamental doctrine.

I. DEFINITION OF WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

- A. *The Holy Spirit:* In the command, “Walk by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16), there is urgent exhortation to walk by the power and the presence of the Spirit who dwells within. The Greek is simple and direct: *Pneumati peripateite*. *Pneumati* is a simple dative, to be translated *by the Spirit* rather than *in the Spirit* as in the Authorized Version. As in Galatians 5:5, the absence of the article does not indicate an impersonal spirit, either human or divine, but the Holy Spirit Himself. . . The Exegesis is, accordingly, plain. Christians are commanded to walk by the person and power of the Holy Spirit if they desire to have the lusts of the flesh unfulfilled. It is clear that walking by the Spirit is a continual experience, as *peripateite* is in the present tense, with the thought, *continue to walk* by the Spirit. The failure to continue walking by the Spirit will result in immediate spiritual failure.”¹
- B. *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament:* “Paul often used the verb “walk” (*peripateō*), but he did so against the backdrop of the Old Testament where this verb refers to behavior in keeping with God’s will (the Hebrew word *hālak* has the same meaning). As the Spirit “leads,” the Christian “walks” by following God’s will in dependence on the Spirit’s enabling.”²
- C. *A Survey of Bible Doctrine:* “To be Spirit-filled is to be Spirit-controlled, and this means dedication of life, putting away sin, and constant dependence on His power. Prayer and human resolve may often be involved in meeting these conditions; but when they are met, the Spirit’s control automatically follows. When the conditions are met, the filling will be experienced.”³

¹ John Walvord, *The Holy Spirit*, pg. 205.

²Roy B. Zuck, *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994; Logos Research Systems, 1996), 275.

³Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, “Holy Spirit, filling”. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995, c1972).

II. THOUGHTS TO PONDER ABOUT WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

- A. *The Mystery of the Holy Spirit*: The Christian life is a pilgrimage. In the imagery of the Scripture, it is a journey that we travel by foot. Walking is a relatively slow mode of transportation. Most of us move along this journey at a snail's pace. We do not race and leap through the obstacle course of temptation. There are barriers that impede our progress. At every point we face the speed-bumps of the flesh. Again Paul writes:

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)

Here is the battle. The old man is pitted against the new man. The sin nature of the flesh fights to choke the influence of the Spirit. Though this warfare is internal and invisible, there are clear outward signs of the carnage wrought by the battle. When the Spirit is victorious, we see the fruit of it. When the flesh wins, we also see the outward evidence.⁴

- B. *Heritage of Great Evangelical Teaching*: "When Paul in the midst of his teaching about the walk in the Spirit (16–26) tells us, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts," he tells us what the only way is in which deliverance from the flesh is to be found. To understand this word, "crucified the flesh," and abide by it, is the secret of walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Let each one who longs to walk by the Spirit try to enter into its meaning."⁵
- C. *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*: "Walking by its very nature is a succession of dependent acts. When one foot is lifted in order to place it in front of the other one, it is done in faith that the foot remaining on the ground will support the full weight of the body. Each foot in turn acts as a support while the other foot is being moved forward. If you can't trust each foot to hold the other in turn then you will stand still. Progress can be made only by trusting. So it is in the Christian life. We make progress as we depend on the Spirit and let Him have full control."⁶
- D. "Walking in the Spirit" should not be confused with being anointed by the Spirit, receiving the Holy Spirit at salvation, or some supernatural manifestation of the Holy Spirit (like speaking in tongues). Walking in the Spirit is what every Christian should constantly strive to do, for only when we are walking in the Spirit, can we give glory to God.

⁴ R. C. Sproul, *The Mystery of the Holy Spirit*, pgs. 161-162.

⁵ *Heritage of Great Evangelical Teaching*, under "Failure to Walk in the Spirit". (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996) Logos Bible Software.

⁶ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, "Holy Spirit, filling". (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995, c1972).

III. APPARENT PARADOXES CONCERNING WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

- A. Unbelievers, who do not have the Holy Spirit, can seem to display the fruit of the Spirit like believers, even though they do not know Christ or love God.
- B. The believer can display what appears to be the fruit of the Spirit, yet display what appears to be the fruit of the Spirit in the power of the flesh.
- C. Though walking in the Spirit is by definition a divine work in the life of a believer, the believer is nevertheless commanded to walk in the Spirit, which places the responsibility upon the believer to obey.
- D. The believer may be walking in the Spirit and the Spirit be empowering them to give glory to God and yet the very next minute be walking in the flesh and not pleasing God at all. If the Holy Spirit is working in the believer, how can this be?

We must learn to discern the difference between civil righteousness and the fruit of the Spirit. The difference is more than one of degree. It is a difference of kind as well. (R. C. Sproul, *The Mystery of the Holy Spirit*, pg.167.)

IV. SCRIPTURAL PROOF OF WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

- A. **Ezek. 36:22-28** “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. 23 “I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord,” declares the Lord God, “when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. 24 “For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. 25 “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. 28 “You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.
- B. **Rom. 8:1-9** Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according

to the Spirit. 5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

C. **Gal. 5:16-25** But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. 19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

D. **Texts Dealing with Those Things Which Hinder Our Walk in the Spirit:**

1. **Gen. 6:3, 5** Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." . . . 5 Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.
2. **Eph. 4:30** Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.
3. **I Thess. 5:19** Do not quench the Spirit.

E. **Scriptural Instruction for Letting the Spirit Have Control:**

1. **Psa. 51:17** The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.
2. **I John 1:9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The chart below contrasts the deeds of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit.

The deeds of the flesh are evident	The fruit of the Spirit is evident
Immorality - Any sexual relations outside of a marriage in thought or deed.	Love is defined by Paul in I Cor. 13:4-8 and has some of the same qualities of the fruit of the Spirit. <i>“Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. . .”</i>
Impurity - Any unholy and or immoral activity.	
Sensuality - Lustful cravings after evil and immorality.	
Idolatry - Anything which takes the place of that which is to be given to God.	
Sorcery - Practicing magic, fortune telling, astrology, seances, etc.	
Enmities - Bitterness, hatred, holding grudges.	Joy - The inner peace and blessedness that comes from knowing Christ and trusting in the promises of blessings to come.
Strife - Argumentative, combative, quarrelsome.	Peace - A non-anxious, non-fretting attitude in every circumstance.
Jealousy - Selfish greediness which despises other people’s possessions or achievements.	Patience - A contentment with all circumstances and a willingness to wait for God’s timing.
Outbursts of anger - Hot headed, temper tantrums, uncontrolled spirit.	Kindness - Self controlled love towards others which seeks to do what is best for them.
Disputes - Desire to quarrel, setting others up for an argument.	Goodness - Personal integrity and a lifestyle of righteousness.
Dissensions - An attitude of complaining, bickering, feuding, and contention.	Faithfulness - Consistent lifestyle of reliability and trustworthiness.
Factions - To rise up against the truth of God, trying to win others to your false position.	Gentleness - One who is characterized by a gracious and non-combative spirit.
Envy - The desire to want something that is rightfully someone else’s.	Self control - One who is in control of their physical and emotional faculties.
Drunkenness - Under the influence of alcohol or a controlling substance.	
Carousing - Lifestyle of partying and licentious living.	

V. **ERRORS CONCERNING WALKING IN THE SPIRIT**

- A. False – You can walk in the flesh and the Spirit at the same time.
- B. False – Walking in the Spirit is something God does by grace, you have no part in it.
- C. False – Walking in the Spirit is a once for all occurrence.
- D. False – Walking in the Spirit is verified by miraculous sign gifts.
- E. False – Unconfessed sin does not hamper us from walking in the Spirit.

VI. **APPLICATION CONCERNING WALKING IN THE SPIRIT**

- A. You must continually choose to walk by the Spirit.
- B. You must continually study the Word of God so that you can walk by the Spirit.
- C. You must confess your sins so that you can walk by the Spirit.
- D. You must not grieve or quench the Spirit by walking in the flesh.
- E. You can know you are walking in the Spirit when your heart is right with God, your sins are confessed, you are striving to obey the Word of God, while depending on the Holy Spirit's assistance, and you display the fruit of the Spirit in your life.
- F. The only Christian who is right with the Lord is the Christian who is walking in the Spirit, everyone else is living in sin.

**What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill.**

**Return, Thou sacred dove, return ,
Sweet messenger of rest,
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn,
And drove Thee from my breast.**

**The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from its throne,
And worship only Thee.⁷**

⁷Charles Spurgeon, in *What the Holy Spirit Does in a Believer's Life*, quotes William Cowper, pg. 164.)