



Our Spirit-Filled Savior: The Holy Spirit in Luke's Gospel

Luke Series #26

David Sunday

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Father, we pray You would work mightily by Your Spirit and through Your Word so we would know, trust and hope in the risen Christ and His indwelling Spirit in our lives to find the strength we need to live in holiness for You this coming week. May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of all our hearts be pleasing in Your sight, oh Lord, our Rock and Redeemer. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

When I was growing up, we used to sing a chorus in church:

To be like Jesus, to be like Jesus
All I ask is to be like Him
All through life's journey to final glory
All I ask is to be like Him.

(From To be Like Jesus, Traditional)

How much of an example is Jesus to you? How much thought do you give on a daily basis to imitating Jesus as your example? Is your constant longing and prayer to be like Jesus?

We don't talk much in Reformed Evangelical churches today about imitating God in Christ. It is a subject that makes Evangelical Christians suspicious, often for good reason. If we are not careful, a concept of imitating God can subtly lead us to focus on our works and efforts rather than relying on God's grace. We must never forget that our fundamental need is first and foremost for a Savior, not an Example. If in following Jesus as our Example, we begin to rely on our own works, we need to quickly repent and remember: "In Christ alone [our] hope is found" (from In Christ Alone by Keith and Kristin Getty).

However, we should not overlook the way the New Testament commends Jesus as an Example and Model to us. He is not only lifted up as our Savior but also as our Example. I want to underscore this truth by quoting three of Christ's apostles.

1. The Apostle Paul in Philippians 2:5-6 says, "*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.*" So Christ is our Example in His attitude and mindset of servanthood.

2. The Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 2:21 says, *“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.”* So Christ becomes our Example in His sufferings.
3. The Apostle John in 1 John 2:5-6 says, *“but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”* The New International Version says, *“Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.”*

So Paul says Christ should be our Example in His attitude of servanthood, Peter says Christ should be our Example in His attitude of submission to suffering, and John says Christ should be our Example in all of His life. We are to walk as Jesus walked. To top it all off, we have Jesus Himself at the last supper with His disciples. He washed their feet as a Servant, then said these words:

“You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.” (John 13:13-17)

Is Jesus portrayed in the New Testament as an Example for believers? Yes. Yet I wonder how many of us really believe it is a reasonable goal to walk as Jesus walked. We tend to think that is alright for super-spiritual saints but not for us. Unbelief starts to rear its ugly head. Or we think, “Jesus is God. Of course He lived the way He lived but I cannot do the same. I'm only a man/woman.” We check out at the idea of following Jesus as our Example. One man argued this way: “If Jesus is superhuman, then I can admire him but I do not have to take seriously his call to emulate him. I can never be a superhuman being.”

Is the imitation of Christ even slightly attainable for believers? In order to answer that question, we must first ask ourselves another important question: Do we believe Jesus Christ is really fully human? I'm going to assume most of us believe He is fully God. If you don't, I encourage you to read the testimony of Scripture, be persuaded by the Holy Spirit that Jesus is God and fall before Him in obedient worship. What I am about to say should in no way diminish the reality that Jesus Christ is the eternal God. Yet do we believe Jesus is also fully man? He is so fully God that—even in the womb of the virgin Mary—He was amazingly upholding the universe by the Word of His power.

He is also fully man—the God-man. Many of us balk at His humanity and are not sure we really believe in the fullness of His humanity. Test yourselves with these questions. If at any point your answer is, “I'm not so sure,” or “I don't know,” it could be you don't fully embrace the truth of Christ's humanity.

- Did Jesus know physical and mental limitations? Did he get tired? Were there things He didn't know or had to learn?

- Was He subject to all sorts of temptations?
- Did He know what it was like to be misunderstood, hated, weak and weary, vulnerable to death?
- Did He learn as other people learn—by the difficult road of diligence and discipline of mind?
- Did He grow strong in body through the hard work of rigorous living?
- Did He gain His heart for the poor and disenfranchised by knowing firsthand what it was to be poor and oppressed?
- Did He gain compassion by purposely living among the sick and diseased, the ostracized and the sinners, the weak and the oppressed, the helpless and the dying? Did He choose not to shield Himself from the hurts, pains and sufferings of people in His time and place?
- Did Jesus feel trepidation in the face of death?
- Did He really die a mortal's death?

(Questions adapted from The Presence and the Power by Gerald F. Hawthorne, 2003)

All of these questions point us to the humanity of Jesus. How human is your Jesus? Is He any less human than you are? Is there any aspect of your human experience except for sin—which is not essential to humanity—which Jesus cannot understand or with which He cannot identify? The Bible clearly portrays Jesus as a full, complete man.

How did He live such an amazing life? We need to think about this question more often. The Apostles Creed begins: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary...suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried." We jump from His birth to His sufferings but in between He lived a life of obedience to the Father—holiness, love, compassion and power—for 33 years. How did Jesus live this remarkable life? In answering that question, we can learn how we—by grace—can follow Christ as our Example and walk as He walked.

I think the best summary to the question of how Jesus lived a mighty, holy, loving, wise, bold, truthful and compassionate life is found in Acts—the second book written by Luke. In Acts 10:38, the Apostle Peter is preaching to the household of Cornelius. How did Jesus live this remarkably God-glorifying and humanity-blessing life? Peter answers this question by saying, "*...God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.*" That is how Jesus lived this life. He was anointed by God with the Holy Spirit and with power. God was with Him and that is how He went about doing good, freeing people from captivity to Satan and healing them of their diseases.

I don't think it is any accident that Luke records Jesus saying to believers in Acts 1:8: "*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*" Believers need the Holy Spirit and power to

carry the gospel and message of the Kingdom into all the world. Luke also tells us in Acts 10:38 that is how Jesus lived His life. Luke is showing us the resources that were available to Jesus—which enabled and empowered Him to live the remarkable, god-glorifying life—are available to every disciple of Jesus today. The Holy Spirit and power enable us to walk as Jesus walked. The same supernatural power of obedience and faithfulness to His mission is now granted to us.

You might ask: “Why did Jesus need the Holy Spirit?” He did not need the Holy Spirit to add anything to Who He was in His nature as God. He was and is eternally and infinitely everything God is.

Bruce Ware has written an excellent book called The Man Christ Jesus in which he addresses this question.

Everything of supernatural power and enablement that [Jesus], in His human nature, would lack... He lived his life fundamentally as a man, and as such, he relied on the Spirit to provide the power, the grace, knowledge, wisdom, direction and enablement He needed, moment by moment and day by day, to fulfill the mission the Father sent Him to accomplish.

The main doctrine I want us to meditate on is vast in its implications and has fascinated me ever since I first heard it about 20 years ago. I will not be exhaustive with it now so as not to exhaust you. I just want to elevate your appreciation for this doctrine and get you thinking about it because it is very helpful for the Christian life. The doctrine is this: Jesus lived His life as a man in radical dependence on God the Spirit. All that He accomplished in His life, mindset, activities and victories over Satan was accomplished in the power of the same Spirit Whom all believers in Jesus now have. Again, my aim is modest. I want to raise your attention and heighten your appreciation for this Biblical teaching by tracing instances in the Old Testament and in Luke of Jesus' reliance on the Holy Spirit.

Let's look first at the book of the prophet Isaiah which is full of prophecies about the nature and mission of the Messiah.

- Isaiah 11:1-3:

*There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.*

[Isaiah is now going to speak about the character of this Messiah]

*And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear...*

This is a wonderful statement of the character of the Messiah. As you think about Jesus' dealings with people such as the woman at the well or Nicodemus or others we have seen in Luke's Gospel, think of His extraordinary wisdom, great power and wonderful obedience to

His Father in all things. Ask yourself where this character came from. The answer is in Isaiah 11:2, “*And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him.*” It was through the Spirit that Jesus had such wisdom, understanding, discernment, power and knowledge. All His obedience sprang from the fear of the Lord. The Spirit was the source of all these things.

The early church father Jerome wrote, “The whole fountain of the Holy Spirit descended and rested upon Jesus.” Isn't that a beautiful description of how Jesus was filled with the Spirit?

- Isaiah 42:1-4 is a ‘servant song’ about the Messiah:

*Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my Spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations.
He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;
a bruised reed he will not break,
and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.
He will not grow faint or be discouraged
till he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his law.*

Here the Messiah is portrayed as the ultimate Judge Who brings justice to bear on this fallen world. It is remarkable that He does this with great gentleness. Those who put their trust in Him feel like a bruised reed—one of those little reeds in a marsh that has fallen over and has been trampled—yet Jesus does not break that crushed reed but nurses it back to life. He brings justice into the world in a way that fans into flame the life of God in people who feel like their spiritual lives are just flickering candles about to be snuffed out. He does so with gentleness and kindness as a Spirit-inspired, justice-bringing King. The reason He can do all this is because of the working of God's Spirit in His life (Isaiah 42:1).

- Isaiah 61:1-2 is a famous passage. These were the verses Jesus read when He began His public ministry. He could have chosen Isaiah 53 which concerns His death and sufferings but He chose this passage instead.

*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;*

Isaiah 11 focused on the Messiah's character qualities while Isaiah 61 focuses on His conduct and activity—what He accomplishes—particularly through His proclamation. He proclaims liberty to the captives, good news to the poor, opening of the prison to those who are bound.

His preaching is full of good news to those who are oppressed. The reason for this is His anointing and commissioning by God through the Spirit upon Him to be the Messiah.

As people in the Old Testament read these passages, they would long for the Spirit-empowered Messiah to appear—the One Who would bring God's justice to bear in this fallen world and bring it in such a way that poor, oppressed, brokenhearted, mourning people could be healed of all that breaks them.

We come to the New Testament. Luke is very intent on showing us Jesus as this Messiah. He continues to show us how the Holy Spirit is upon Jesus. We have read and preached on these passages already as we've gone through Luke's Gospel, so I want to simply highlight some introductory passages that show us Jesus as the Spirit-anointed Messiah. Then we will look at a few of the implications for our own lives.

- Luke 1:34-35:

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" [how will I conceive?] And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God."

Where else in the Bible do we hear of the Holy Spirit overshadowing or 'hovering over' something? In the first chapter of Genesis—as God is calling a world into existence out of nothing—the Holy Spirit is the energizing, supervising One Who breathes life into creation. We now see the same language as the Holy Spirit mysteriously, sovereignly, secretly takes the humanity of the virgin Mary and forms in her a new humanity Who is altogether holy. For the first time since Adam, we find in Jesus One Who is truly man and truly holy. He is the Firstfruits of a new creation. God is providing a fresh start for humanity. The Holy Spirit plays an instrumental role in fashioning the humanity of Jesus in the womb of the virgin Mary.

Of course, we cannot imitate this in our birth. We were not conceived in the womb of a virgin. Yet this truth is for us. God the Holy Spirit did this in Jesus so we in Christ Jesus can become a new creation. At His conception, we see indication that He is the Spirit-anointed Messiah.

- Luke 2:39-52 speaks of Jesus' childhood. We don't know a lot from Scripture about Jesus' childhood because Luke is the only Gospel writer who records anything about it. Luke 2:40 says, "*And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom.*" The phrase 'filled with wisdom' is progressive and passive, meaning the action was ongoing. He was 'being filled' and it was 'being done to Him.' Someone was continuously filling Jesus with wisdom. Think of the Old Testament passages we have read. Does Luke 2:40 remind you of Isaiah 11?

*And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,*

*the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.*

Although Luke does not explicitly speak of the Holy Spirit in his account of the childhood of Jesus, we certainly get the impression from him that the Holy Spirit was active in Jesus' childhood. He was filling Jesus with wisdom, as Luke 2:52 recounts: "*And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.*" Even in the 'silent years' of Jesus' development, the Holy Spirit is at work in the life of our Messiah Jesus—teaching Him, filling Him with wisdom, preserving His character and holiness, teaching Him obedience to the Father.

- Luke 3:21-22 speaks of Jesus' baptism:

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

Jesus is entering the waters of baptism as our Priest and Sacrifice, entering into solidarity with sinful human beings who need repentance, purification and the renewing and pouring out of the Spirit of God in their lives. As Jesus enters the water, there is a grand moment of revelation as the heavens are opened and the dove descends upon Jesus. That dove is a symbol of gentleness and purity. The Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus, resting upon Him in bodily form. A voice comes from heaven commissioning and anointing Him to be the promised Messiah Who ushers in a new covenant era.

This is an extraordinarily significant event in redemptive history. From now on, Jesus will go about doing good, healing, proclaiming the Kingdom of God and releasing those under the oppression of Satan. He does this because He has been anointed with the Holy Spirit and power; God is with Him and pleased with Him. Yet before Jesus can officially enter His earthly ministry, He must be tested.

- Luke 4 begins with these words: "*And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil*" (Luke 4:1-2).

Jesus is under the control of the Spirit as the Spirit-anointed Messiah. He returned from the Jordan. He is then led by the Spirit into the wilderness—a vast, arid region where you would hate to spend forty days, especially without food. The fact that He was 'led by the Spirit' shows His willing submission to the Spirit's leadership and guidance. It also shows us the Spirit Who leads Him strategically into a place of testing, maps out the battle terrain and directs the Warrior King to conflict with the devil never leaves Jesus during His temptation. He leads Him there but does not leave Him alone. He stands with Him—empowering,

sustaining and preserving Him—to resist the devil, overcome the insinuations of the evil one and stand firm in obedience to the Father.

The devil thought He would surprise Jesus in the wilderness, but the Holy Spirit is springing a trap to catch the devil off guard. Jesus thwarts and overcomes the evil one through His trust in the Word of God and the empowerment of the Spirit of God. Luke 4:14 makes it clear the Holy Spirit was with Jesus all the way: *“And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country.”*

How did Jesus overcome the tempter? Don't for a moment think that it was easy for Him because, after all, He was God. He overcame the tempter as a true man—standing in our place, going into the conflict we all have—and stood firm, empowered by the Spirit. That is how He overcame Satan's temptations and stayed true to the Father's call on His life.

- In Luke 4:18-21, Jesus then comes to Nazareth, opens that scroll and reads words from Isaiah:

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”*

*And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant
and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed
on him. And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has
been fulfilled in your hearing.”*

Because He is filled with the Spirit, His words are full of grace. Luke 4:22 says, *“And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, ‘Is not this Joseph's son?’”* But as He keeps on preaching and speaking, we see that Spirit-anointed preaching is not always accepted or welcomed. Often the empowerment by the Spirit as the Word is preached brings the opposition of Satan in hatred. This happened with Jesus' preaching in Luke 4:28: *“When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, he went away.”*

I often pray that the Spirit will empower my preaching. Maybe one indication of His empowering is that you would drive me over to the Fox River and try to dump me in the water. That was the reaction of many people to the Spirit-empowered preaching of the Messiah.

Luke is showing us in these verses how the Holy Spirit accompanies Jesus at key events in the beginning of His ministry.

We see this also at the point of Jesus' death. Hebrews 9:14 tells us: "*who [Jesus] through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God...*" At every point of His life—conception, childhood, the beginning of His ministry, conflict with the devil, preaching, teaching, mighty works, death and resurrection—God the Holy Spirit was working mightily in Jesus to enable Him to live as a man the perfect life that Adam and all his descendants had failed to live.

God is showing us through the Spirit and life of Jesus what God can do through a human being who fully relies and yields to the Spirit of God. A Spirit-filled human being looks like Jesus. A mentor of D.L. Moody said, "The world has yet to see what God can do through a man who is fully devoted to Him" (Henry Varley, British evangelist, 1873). It's a great quote but it is a bit wrong because Jesus was fully devoted and yielded to the Spirit.

The point of application for us is that the same resources Jesus used to live His life of obedience, love and sacrificial service are given to us who believe and trust in Jesus. How did Jesus live this life? Did He have access to something we don't? No, Jesus depended on the Word of God, prayed constantly and yielded to the Holy Spirit. That same Word, prayer and Spirit dwell in all who follow Jesus. The same Spirit Who filled Jesus is freely given to those who trust in Jesus today.

1. The first application to our lives should be great encouragement. How do we live and walk as Jesus did? How do we have His mindset in our lives? We need to walk in and by the Spirit. The Apostle Paul tells us: "*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh*" (Galatians 5:16). Depend on and yield to the Spirit and He—the Divine third Person of the Trinity—will lead you in ways of holiness and thankfulness and empower you.
2. This should greatly encourage us in our temptations. We who trust in Jesus are united by faith to the One Who has conquered the tempter, crushed the serpent's head and entered into mortal hand-to-hand combat with the enemy and prevailed. We are in Christ and united to Him. When we fail and fall into sin, what should we do? We should preach the gospel to ourselves and thank God that though we fail, Jesus has prevailed and His righteousness is our righteousness. "*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 8:1).

We should not end there, however. The gospel also includes the marvelous truth that the Spirit Who indwelt Jesus now lives in us and the grace of God that has appeared to Jesus has appeared to us so we can say, "No!" to ungodliness and, "Yes!" to all that is pleasing to the Father. We can be filled with the fruit of holiness. The gift of the Holy Spirit from the ascended Christ enables us in our weakness to do what is humanly impossible in our flesh—to walk in obedience. Praise God the same Spirit Who enabled Jesus to prevail is in us.

3. The Spirit empowers us in our lives and ministries:

- a. Are you one who teaches or preaches the Word of God? This truth tells us knowledge and learning—as important as they are—are not enough. We need the power of the Holy Spirit to make the Word meaningful. It is He Who penetrates the heart. That is why we must not only preach with utter dependence on the Spirit but also pray. Our teaching of the children in our homes must be dependent on the Spirit not in our own wisdom or efforts. How encouraging it was for me to be driving to church on Randall Road and be saying, “I believe in the Holy Spirit and trust in You to fill me, use me and make my words and ministry meaningful just as You did with Jesus.”
- b. In his book The Presence and the Power, Gerald Hawthorne speaks to those who are healers—doctors and counselors—of people who are sick in body or mind. The Spirit Who filled the Messiah Jesus also fills all those who trust in Him. He can take your abilities, strengthen and lift you beyond your natural abilities. He will stand with you against the destructive forces of illness and evil—mental, spiritual and physical. As you yield your life to the control of the Holy Spirit, the works of Jesus can be seen through you.

I was talking with Sally Woodhouse's father, who has been a doctor for many years and just turned 78 years old. He told me what a difference it made in his medical practice when he really started to believe in Christ. He marveled how he could sew together sinews and mend bones, but the healing came from God, the Healer. The Spirit of Jesus Who healed diseases and freed people from demons is at work in us as well.

- c. Maybe you are a creative person—artist, teacher, writer or musician. You are gifted to make people laugh, cry or see beauty. Know that the Spirit Who filled people in the Bible to do the things they did and Who filled Jesus to live the beautiful life He lived is in you to enable you to effectively serve God and fulfill your mission in life.
- d. You may think your life is humdrum or unexciting. You work daily on chores that others—and sometimes you yourself—think are not very fulfilling. But these chores are necessary to provide for, feed and keep your family together. Remember the Holy Spirit was with Jesus through 30 silent, ordinary, humdrum years while Jesus was preparing to live His ministry for the glory of God. That same Spirit is with you in the menial, humdrum, boring tasks of your life. As He fills you and you yield to Him, you can offer the daily, ordinary gifts of your life as a sacrifice to God. He will quicken, enliven and inspire you to make that ordinary life significant in His Kingdom.

I want to lead us in prayer as we come to the Lord's communion table. Jesus invites all who trust in Him as their Savior, look to Him as their example, realize they need to be cleansed from sin, desire to follow Him and walk as He walked. He is here to nourish and strengthen you. His Spirit is present at this table to take this symbol of His dying body and precious blood which atones for our sins and nourish you when you come to the table in faith.

Join me in prayer as I seek for the Holy Spirit to apply these truths to our lives. Then let us feast at this table.

O Holy Spirit of God, visit now these souls of ours and stay within us until we breathe our final breath. Never leave us, for we depend on You moment by moment. You are the third Person of the Trinity and gift of the Father through the ascension and death of the Son now poured out on our lives. We pray You would inspire all our thoughts and permeate all our imaginations. Would you guide and direct all our decisions, live in the inward citadel of our will and order all our actions? Holy Spirit, be with us in our silence and our speech, our business and leisure, in company and in solitude, when we wake in the freshness of the morning and when we fall on our beds in the weariness of the night. Give us grace at all times to rejoice and depend on Your holy, sweet, joyful, convicting fellowship. Live in us and fill us that we may walk as Jesus walked, follow in His steps and reflect His life in our mortal bodies. We pray You would show us Christ at His communion table and enable us to feast on Him as we worship Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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