

## Living in the Spirit

Throughout the Old Testament we find one major problem that continually hindered man from experiencing close fellowship with God. **"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it"** (Jeremiah 17: 9). Out of the heart comes all manner of sin. Nevertheless God also gave a special promise that would remedy the problem forever: **"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit in you and move you to follow My decrees and be careful to keep My laws."** (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

When the blessed **Holy Spirit** was poured out on the Church, He fulfilled every detail of the Father's promise in Ezekiel 36. The Spirit's infinite power was given to us so that we could live a life that's pleasing to God. The Holy Spirit does this by:

- 1) **Delivering us from the power of sin.** *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the **law of the Spirit of life** set me free from the law of sin and death."* (Romans 8:1-2).
- 2) **Making us right in God's sight.** *"He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and **renewal by the Holy Spirit**, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."* (Titus 3: 5-7).
- 3) **Giving us immediate access to the Father.** *"For through Him (Jesus Christ) we have access by **one Spirit** to the Father"* (Ephesians 2:18).
- 4) **Empowering us.** *"That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with **might by His Spirit** in the inner man ... And to know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the **power that works within us**"* (Ephesians 3:16,19-20).
- 5) Now, with the **Holy Spirit** living inside, as a believer you have all power - out of the treasure house of God's vast "riches" - to live the way God wants you to live (2 Corinthians 4:7). But there is also something required of you - you are encouraged to appropriate what the Holy Spirit has poured in, *"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to **put off** your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to **put on the new self**, created to be just like God in true righteousness and holiness."* (Ephesians 4:22-24).

We have been given the Holy Spirit, but He only works in our lives to the degree we allow Him to. **"So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want."** (Galatians 5:16-17) Notice, we are not only to receive the Holy Spirit (John 20:22), but are to **"walk in the Spirit"** (Galatians 5:25) – to live under His presence and allow Him to have full influence over our daily lives. This "walk" in the Spirit is also described as:

- **Walking in the Light...** *"If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we **walk in the light**, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son, purifies us from all sin."* (1 John 1:6-7).
- **Walking in Love...** *"Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and **live a life of love**, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."* (Ephesians 5: 1-2).
- **Walking in Faith...** *"For we **walk by faith**, not by sight"* (2 Corinthians 5:7).

The Holy Spirit works in the believer by prompting and encouraging him toward the kind of life He wants him to live (1 Thessalonians 2:12; 4:1-8). If you respond, the Holy Spirit is released to do a work of change in your life, so that you grow to be more like Him (2 Corinthians 3:18). If, however, you deliberately choose to resist the Spirit's promptings, you can, in successive stages, end up:

- a) *Grieving the Holy Spirit* (Ephesians 4:30).
- b) *Quenching the Holy Spirit* (1 Thessalonians 5:19).
- c) *Insulting the Holy Spirit* (Hebrews 10:29).

The Holy Spirit birthed us into a new life in God, and now it is the Spirit who helps us live that life. As we live in Him we experience the 'life and peace' that we were created for. It is as we walk under His covering that the **fruits of the Spirit**, as well as the **gifts of the Spirit**, begin to operate.

**Living in the Spirit** is living a transparent life. It is a life of obedience to the Lord God, and it is the very life that Jesus Christ Himself has given to us by the Holy Spirit. Has God found in you a person who is willing to obey Him completely? Can He trust you with His greatest gift? If you are going to live in the Spirit you must say no to self. There are plenty of 'would be' followers of Christ who would follow Him halfway, but not all the way. Your biggest problem is self. "*Am I willing to die to self?*" The normal Christian life is one that is willing to follow the Holy Spirit in complete obedience, without reservation, and to disown self. It means to commit yourself literally, utterly, and completely in unreserved **obedience** to Him.

**Obedience** to the Holy Spirit means **freedom**. There is great freedom in the spiritual life that comes as we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit. The reason it is so freeing is that it cuts us loose from subtle selfishness. "*...If you love Me; you will obey Me,*" Jesus said. When we obey Him we are walking in perfect freedom. "*It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery*" (Galatians 5:1). A little later the apostle Paul writes, "*If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law*" (verse 18). "The requirement of the Law" is fulfilled in those believers, "*who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit*" (Romans 8:4). The idea of "walking" is literally "*to walk about,*" meaning the habitual way a person conducts his life.

The apostle Paul speaks of this continual habitual "action" again in Galatians 5:16 when he says, "**Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.**" Who is habitually ordering your life? Do you seek complete obedience to your own will, desires, ambitions, goals and glory? When you are obeying your Lord you are enjoying **perfect liberty** because He is in control. Someone once said, "*Make me captive, Lord, and then I shall be free.*" When we are free in Christ we are bound to everything to which He is bound to, i.e., righteousness, holiness, love, etc. "**Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty**" (2 Corinthians 3:17). When you are living in the Spirit you are living in **freedom**. Only then are you free to live the Christian life as God intended.

The result of this **freedom** to live in the Spirit is the "*fruit of the Spirit*" (Galatians 5:22-23). The Holy Spirit reproduces the likeness of Christ in us. Here is a cluster of the characteristics of Jesus Christ:

- When you live in the Spirit you have an abundance of grace for daily living (2 Cor. 12:9).
- When you are living or "*walking in the Spirit*" you are living a Spirit-controlled life. We are constantly, moment by moment, being *filled with the Spirit*.
- Living in the Spirit is a life constantly, consciously, and definitely subjected to the Spirit. It is a life that has a consuming desire for the Holy Spirit to be in control over your every thought, word, and deed.
- When you live in the Spirit you live a life that is unceasingly controlled by the Holy Spirit. You cannot live the abundant Christian life unless the Holy Spirit is in constant control. However, if you are not living in the Spirit, you are living under the control of your carnal flesh, which is opposed, to everything God is for. The Holy Spirit is the divine Person who should control your life. As you yield yourself to Him He uses you to accomplish God's will in your life and ministry. He produces His amazing fruit in you.

But are you allowing Him to be in constant control of your life? Are you cooperating (partnering) with Him in all things? We have all been given freedom to **walk** in the divine life of the Spirit. So let's exercise that freedom right now...