

Walking in the Spirit: Part 2

Galatians 5:22-23

Introduction

Last week we began a mini-series on walking in the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit is God's alternative to serving him by simply focusing on his commandments and trying to keep them by our own moral will-power. As we walk in the Spirit, He gradually and progressively transforms and empowers us to serve God effectively. We learned in Romans 8:4, "that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." ([Romans 8:4 NKJV](#))

Galatians 5:22 Paul writes, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." ([Galatians 5:22-25 NKJV](#))

So what does it look like to walk in the Spirit? Well, physical walking requires three crucial elements: balance, propulsion, and direction. Walking in the Spirit also requires three essential elements. Last week we looked at the first element--"setting your mind on the things of the Spirit." Romans 8:5-6 says, "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace." ([Romans 8:5-6 NKJV](#))

Walking in the Spirit is choosing to think about every area of your life from God's perspective and grace. Today, we will add the second element of "keeping in step with the Spirit" in the parallel passage of Galatians 5:25, and next week, we will examine the third element of "sowing to the Spirit."

Paul says in Galatians 5:16, "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." ([Galatians 5:16 NKJV](#))

I. Holy Spirit Direction

In verse 25, Paul writes, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." ([Galatians 5:25 NKJV](#))

The NIV says, "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."

The Greek word used here for "walk" means walking in a line; to proceed under another's direction." It was used to describe soldiers marching in response to the directions given by their commanding officer. So to "keep in step with the Spirit" means to be alert and responsive to the Spirit's direction and guidance for your life.

The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal "force" that you tap into and use to accomplish your goals in life. The Holy Spirit is a Person who guides you to God's will and empowers you to accomplish it. God doesn't hand us a rule book and expect us to carry out the rules in some mechanical way. Jesus gives you His Spirit so you can apply His will and guidance to your life every day.

Jesus promised that when He left to return to the Father, He would send "another Comforter and Counselor" to give us the help we need to be successful. In John 14:16, Jesus tells the disciples, "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you." (John 14:16-17 NKJV)

There are two dangerous extremes we need to avoid. Walking in the Spirit can be a little complicated because the subject is personal and subjective—and there's just no way to get around it. Because of this, there are Christians who tend to fall into two extreme camps.

Some believers invoke the Holy Spirit as an excuse to avoid using their minds and common sense. They claim that the Holy Spirit guides them about what clothes to wear, what route to take to work, what food to order from the menu, etc. They claim that God talks to them this way virtually all the time and that you must be unspiritual unless you can claim the same thing.

This danger borders on superstition, which is the need to find supernatural explanations for everything that happens. Webster's Dictionary defines superstition as, "1a: a belief or practice resulting from ignorance, fear of the unknown, trust in magic or chance, or a false conception of causation. b: an irrational abject attitude of mind toward the supernatural, nature, or God resulting from superstition. 2: a notion maintained despite evidence to the contrary. Some Christians use it as an excuse for not taking responsibility, exercising cognitive belligerence, and even demonstrating rebellion against God that challenges His reputation.

For others, the danger is to feel uncomfortable with any subjective or unpredictable feature of Christianity. They want irrefutable proof that any personal guidance is from God, and since that is not possible, they view the whole subject as a waste of time and unreal. They use the excesses and abuses as an excuse to reject the whole area.

This danger borders on deism which affirms God's existence but denies that he is personally involved in our lives in ways that we can recognize and see. Deism is belief in the existence of a supreme being, specifically of a creator who does not intervene in the universe. Deists accept the existence of a

creator on the basis of reason but reject the belief that God is involved or interacts with any of His creation. Humanity is on its own. Deism reduces spirituality to a recipe of Bible verses and safe formulas. It attempts to make Christianity safe, predictable, boring, universal, and sometimes even autonomous from God. Unfortunately they leave no room for spontaneity in meetings; no risk-taking in evangelism; God is an extension of me. God is what I want Him to be.

But, if God wants us to "keep in step with the Spirit," there must be a way to recognize his guidance and avoid these extremes.

II. Recognizing Holy Spirit Guidance

So how do we recognize the Spirit's guidance? God's Spirit will never guide us in a direction that contradicts God's Word. The same Spirit who guides us also inspired God's Word. The Holy Spirit always guides us consistently with moral integrity and serving love.

The context of Galatians 5:25 speaks of the Spirit's guidance in both of these areas. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. That's moral correction.

When we stay in step with the Spirit, He leads us away from destructive attitudes and behaviors. He teaches us to avoid boasting and envy and keeps us from challenging God's reputation. The Holy Spirit will speak to and even challenge your conscience.

He can do this directly, through the Word or other Christians. The Holy Spirit is not limited to how He can sensitize or arrest your attention on different issues. He will also challenge or rebuke you, something we often call "the conviction of the Spirit." Sometimes, the Holy Spirit is very issue-specific, and other times He gives us a more general awareness of situations.

But however He speaks to us, it's essential to view the activity of the Spirit from the perspective of God's grace. If you don't respond to God's offer of grace, you become a prime candidate to fall prey to Satan's accusations.

God also corrects us, and when He does, it's because He loves us, not because He rejects us. God's correction is redemptive; He urges us to always move forward with him. Satan's condemnation is punitive; he tells you how horrible you are and that you might as well give up walking with God." Here's what Hebrews 12 says about God's discipline, "FOR WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE CHASTENS, AND SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES." ([Hebrews 12:6 NKJV](#))

In verse 7, He says, "If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are

without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected *us*, and we paid *them* respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened *us* as seemed *best* to them, but He for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." (Hebrews 12:7-11 NKJV)

Galatians 6:1-2 says, "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:1-2 NKJV)

We call this "servant leadership!" If you keep in step with the Spirit, he will guide your attitudes and behaviors and direct you to serve other people, like restoring fallen Christians and bearing one another's crushing burdens. Sometimes, this can be very specific, like Philip in Acts 8. Sometimes, it's a growing passion for a particular area of service.

That doesn't mean that we only serve people when we get Holy Spirit guidance. Our whole life should be a lifestyle of servanthood. And in our service to God and one another, God's Spirit will guide us personally to the areas of service for which we are uniquely suited.

You can't steer a ship that's not moving. We don't sit around and wait for the Holy Spirit to direct our every move. We actively live the life of Christ every day, and when the Holy Spirit prompts us, we are willing to accept His guidance. The Holy Spirit will never force you to do the right thing, but He will let you know what the right thing to do is.

III. Accepting Holy Spirit Guidance

Finally, let me give you a checklist for Spirit's guidance. First of all, You have to receive the Spirit. If this sounds completely foreign to you, it may be because you are a stranger to the Holy Spirit. Paul says, "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is *rightly* judged by no one. For "WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD THAT HE MAY INSTRUCT HIM?" But we have the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:14-16 NKJV)

This is something that's very easy to remedy. All you need to do is ask Christ to forgive you and come to live within you in the power of His Spirit.

John 7:37 says, "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 NKJV)

Have you asked for the Holy Spirit's guidance? James says that we often do not receive from God because we do not ask him (Jas. 4:2). Sometimes we want to put our spiritual lives on "auto-pilot," selecting the moral areas we want to work on and the service we want to do to maintain the status quo. But it's so much more productive and exciting to present yourself to God each day and for each situation and ask him for his guidance.

Secondly, are you willing to submit to the Spirit's guidance? Sometimes we receive very little guidance from the Spirit (even when we ask) because we are unwilling to submit our lives to God's plan. Maybe it's because we don't fully understand God's grace or unconditional love. When that's the case, you tend to view responding to God's guidance as a confining, crushing duty and burden. But, when you understand and reach out to embrace God's grace, it becomes an invitation to experience God's goodness and faithfulness, and wisdom in a much greater way.

Thirdly, do you see God as a consultant rather than the ruler of your life? James says, "God resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble. Therefore submit to God." When we see God as just a consultant, we are definitely not walking in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit expects us to be ready to obey His guidance even before you know what it is."

It's an important lesson that even King David learned from God. David wasn't perfect. He made a lot of mistakes, but he knew that God was good, and he trusted God with his life. His Psalm 32 quotes God as saying, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. Do not be like the horse *or* like the mule, *Which* have no understanding, Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, Else they will not come near you. Many sorrows *shall be* to the wicked; But he who trusts in the LORD, mercy shall surround him. Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous; And shout for joy, all *you* upright in heart!" (Psalms 32:8-11 NKJV)

"Don't be a moral mule! When God convicts you about something, listen to Him!" Don't make God take more drastic measures to convince you to make a course correction."

Conclusion

One sign of spiritual growth is that we don't always have to learn the hard way. It's a great thing when we begin to respond to the Lord's initial, gentle conviction and guidance. Do you respond to the guidance the Holy Spirit provides? Of course, none of us ever does this perfectly or all the time. If that were the condition for receiving continued guidance, none of us would

ever receive any. Remember, Paul says, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." (25)

It is the Holy Spirit that calls to us to keep our moral activity as Christians alive. If we live to the spirit, we live unto the Lord. And if we live for the Lord, then let us also walk in the Spirit. That means living by the rule of the Spirit, as the Spirit dictates.

Your life in the Spirit requires your personal cooperation. I've talked to people who think the Holy Spirit is not giving them enough guidance about what area of ministry they should get involved in. As you talk with them, it becomes apparent they have no real interest in being involved in serving God, especially if it requires serving others. It's easy to become so self-absorbed that all you can think about is what you want and need. When you suggest to them that there's a connection between their refusal to respond to God's guidance in these obvious, foundational areas, they get offended. When you suggest that God's silence is sometimes connected to their unwillingness to listen and follow Him, they don't want to talk about it anymore.

If you want to walk in the Spirit:

- Have you asked for the Spirit's guidance?
- Are you willing to submit to the Spirit's guidance?
- Are you responding to the guidance you have already received?

Don't wait until your life is in trouble before you call out to God for guidance! Learn to seek out the Lord's help and guidance for each day and then obediently follow His direction and walk in the Spirit.