

End Where You Began

by Alan Martin

This sermon emphasizes the importance of beginning in the spirit and continuing to walk in the spirit. It delves into the concept of being born again of the spirit, highlighting the battle against indwelling sin and the need to nourish and grow in the spirit to overcome the corruption of the world's desires. The sermon stresses the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit in enabling believers to live a new life in Christ, free from the bondage of sin and empowered to fulfill God's desires.

Scripture: John 3:5, Romans 7:15, Romans 8:1, Galatians 5:16, Acts 2:17, Ephesians 5:18, Galatians 5:22, Romans 8:14, Romans 8:9

Topics: "Walking in the Spirit", "Overcoming Sin"

Description

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Transcript

Thinking about those who are baptized today, it made me think about the beginning. And Paul said to the Galatians this statement, having begun in the spirit, would you now try to attain perfection by the flesh? So the beginning is spirit. What did he mean by the beginning is spirit? Well, you remember when Nicodemus in John chapter 3, Nicodemus, the teacher of the Jews, actually a well-known teacher of the Jews, came to Jesus by night because Jesus was already in trouble with the Jewish religious leaders.

And the reason he was in trouble with them is the Jewish religious leaders had already rejected the message of John the Baptist. And John the Baptist was filled with the spirit from his mother's womb. And John the Baptist was proclaiming the word of the Lord.

Well, Jesus wasn't going to say any different word than John the Baptist. So if they weren't going to listen to what John the Baptist had to say, they weren't interested in what Jesus had to say. So there was already tension.

But Nicodemus was a careful listener. And he was, he had a desire to meet with Jesus privately. So he came to him at night.

And while they were talking and asking him questions, we know you're a teacher, you know, because no one could act. We know your teacher come from God because no one can do the things that you do unless God were with him. Jesus interrupted him.

Do you remember what he interrupted him with? He said, Nicodemus, you must be born again. Well, that threw him off. Born again? How can you, Nicodemus said, how can a man being old be born again? When you go back inside your mother's womb, he's thinking physical.

And Jesus is not talking about physical. Jesus says, no, unless you're born of water. And how, how are all of us born first? What do we, where do we conceive in a water sack? In the aortic fluid? Unless you're born of water, which is natural birth and of the spirit and born of the spirit.

So unless you're born of the spirit, you cannot see the kingdom of God because it is a spiritual kingdom. God is spirit. And those that have it or going to have a relationship with him must be born of the spirit.

So the beginning is you receive the Holy Spirit. Now, why is that so important? Because most of us do not realize what we really battle with. Something none of us had a choice in.

And there's something we were every single one of us here were born with and are still having to deal with. And that is in dwelling sin, sin entered the world. And if you want to consider sin, how do you, how do I want you to picture it? I want you to picture it like a spiritual infection, like a COVID, like a plague that entered the world through Adam.

And when sin, this spiritual infection entered the world, sin was spread to every single man and woman from that time on. And every single one of us has been affected by and are still affected by the law of sin in our members. We have been infected.

Our old nature is infected by sin. And where did Paul talk about this? If you want to read about it in more detail, you can read about it in Romans chapter seven, where Paul was explaining he, that he loved God's law and he agreed with it entirely. And then it caused a conflict because he said, wait a minute, I agree with the law.

If the law tells me to do something, I want to do it. And if the law tells me not to do something, I don't want to do it, but I keep having this problem. What I'm wanting to do, I don't end up doing.

And the things that I don't want to do, those things I end up doing. And that's what led him to discover the infection. He said, Oh, if I'm doing what I don't want to do, and if I'm not doing what I do want to do, then it's no longer I. Can you, I want you to think about that.

Most of you are struggling. If you're struggling with things in your life, you think you're the problem. You haven't learned what Paul did.

Paul said, it's no longer I, it's sin living in me. You mean there's something inside you that's causing you the problem. You're not the problem.

Sin in you is the problem. And Paul went on to say, I saw this other law in my members in dwelling sin. And you know what sin inside those members does? It produces all kinds of corrupted desires.

The reason we do things that are not right is because sin is producing and spreading the infection and the contamination throughout us. That's our old nature. And you and I still have it, even as Christians, the sin

dwelling in our members.

And so with sin dwelling in our members, when Paul realized this, that even though he agreed with the law, he still ended up not doing what the law said. Here's what he said. Oh, wretched man that I am who can deliver me from this body of death.

And you know what the body of death means? The body of death is this. It's a, it's a person, whoever it is, that's under the control of that infectious spiritual disease called sin. That person is a condemned person.

And that's why he goes on to say the next chapter, Romans chapter eight. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for another type of person, for those who are in Christ Jesus. And the reason he's talking about no condemnation is there, there's a change of state.

Something happens to a person in Christ that no longer makes them the same condemned person under the slavery to sin. What happens when a person becomes in Christ born again, born of the spirit, no longer under the same condemnation. What happens is the law of the spirit of life in Christ sets us free from the law of sin and death.

And here's how that works. Two laws now work. There's the law of Christ, the law of the spirit of life in Christ.

And there's this law of sin and death. But if the law of the spirit of life in Christ is more powerful, it overcomes the law of sin and death. Now we understand laws, natural laws.

How many of you came in a car? Most of you got probably got here in the car. Maybe some of you walk. What do you do before you turn the car off? What do you do? If you're the driver, what do you do? You go from drive to park.

And then sometimes you put on the brake. Why do cars have to be put in park? Because there's a law of gravity pulling. And if there is the slightest incline, if there's a slightest incline anywhere, your car's not going to be still.

Because gravity is going to be pulling it to the lowest spot, wherever it is. It's going to find the lowest spot it is and pull it that direction. That's the law of gravity.

But you know you overcome the law of gravity every time you start your car? Because you had power. There's ignition. And suddenly there's power.

And it's not that the law of gravity is not existing. It's now there's power overcoming the law of gravity. And that's what happens to a person in Christ.

The law of the spirit of life in Christ becomes a power and ability to dominate and overcome the law of sin and death. And you and I need to realize that. It's some of us don't understand the struggle that we still have.

We think, well, I became a Christian. Isn't that supposed to make me perfect? Not exactly. There is a process involved.

You are born again of the spirit. But you're born young. You're born a baby, an infant spiritually.

And in order to grow, that spirit, that new spirit within you needs to be nourished. We just had a Serenity just had her baby this week. And what's so important in this first week is nourishment.

And that's why Peter said this, as a new believer, as a new born babe in Christ, we are to crave pure spiritual milk. We are to crave nourishment for that spirit so that that spirit can begin to grow. A lot of people do not realize that this was said of John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus.

You can read this. And I think it's the end of Luke chapter one and the beginning of Luke chapter two. Both John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ were described this way.

They grew in wisdom and they became strong in spirit. How did Jesus overcome all sin and temptation before he ever started his public ministry? As he grew, he, Jesus Christ was strong in spirit. And if it remember, there's two laws at work and they, they wrestle against each other.

But if you're strong in spirit, you can overcome the law of sin and death. Paul mentioned the struggle we have, didn't he? In the book of Galatians, he said that the flesh wars against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. So that that's the conflict.

Some of you feel that you go through, you still have that infected old nature. Now you don't have to get into that, but what it takes to overcome that old infected, sinful nature, what the Bible calls your old man is you must nourish and strengthen and feed your new man, your spirit. And the stronger you become in spirit, the more your spirit, the spirit of Christ in you, the Holy spirit with God's good desires, overcomes that old infected sin nature with the bad desires.

That's why in the book of chapter one, Peter talked about the way that the world becomes corrupted. The world has a process that the reason it gets worse and worse and things fall apart and it becomes corrupted. And this is what it says in second Peter chapter one, I think it's about verse four, that there's a corruption in the world that the scripture says the believer escapes, but the word escapes means you flee, you run with your life, you run with your life.

If you want to escape the corruption that's in the world, you run with your life. But it says that this corruption in the world is through the world's desires. In other words, Satan, the enemy of God in trying to keep mankind from discovering the goodness of God has figured out a way to lure us, entrap us, to bait us.

Just like we, when we have a rodent problem, we're not faster than the rodents, we're smarter than they are. And we utilize their desires. We know they have a propensity for certain tastes.

And we actually use those desires to lure them into the snares and traps we have for them. Remember what Jesus said, the thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. We do that.

Hunters do that. Hunters, hunters love deer, don't they? And so they're willing to feed deer, aren't they? Some of them actually have these big stands and, and they have automatic, they have battery power. And every several hours, a wheel whirls up on this, this, this container that's holding corn or something.

And it just feeds the deer. How thoughtful that there's someone wanting to feed the deer. And they get the deer used to coming regularly to this spot to enjoy this free food.

And we know what to set up. And yet we don't recognize that this is the way that Satan keeps us from discovering the goodness of God. He baits the world.

He lures us away from the Father. James talked about this in chapter one of James. He says, when it, when we're tempted and attempted it, they bear tempted or tested is another good way to put it.

When we're tempted, no one should say that God is tempting me. God doesn't tempt you. No, there's someone else tempting you, Satan.

And, but he says, everyone is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own desire. See there that see it's through Satan can't come and put you in a headlock, beat you in the face and say, you're going to, I force you to do my will. No, he's smart.

He can lure you into doing what he wants you to do. He can, he can suggest things to you, but he'll use your desires. And you know what he's exploiting.

He knows that we've been infected by that, that's infectious law of sin in the old man. And he will exploit that and bait us and lure us into doing things we shouldn't be doing. And then we, the trap springs on us and we're caught, but, and God has an answer.

See, we understand that Jesus Christ died on the cross for, for, to forgive us for yielding to temptation. But what we don't understand as much that there's more to, there's more to Jesus than just forgiving us for sins. He came to provide his spirit because just like when sin came, it came with this infectious corrupt desires.

The Holy spirit comes with the very desires of God. The Holy spirit has pure desires, safe desires, healthy desires, sound desires. And those who will allow the Holy spirit to produce those desires in them, they overcome the old desire.

So Peter says this, that by partaking of the divine nature, we escape the corruption that is in the world through desires. In other words, we'll feel, we'll sense that old desire, that infectious desire from our flesh. It's called sin in us producing the wrong kind of desires.

We'll deal with that. We'll, we'll battle it, but here's what will happen. The Holy spirit with the desires of God will produce God's own desires in us.

And when God's own desires are produced in us, now you have a choice. You don't have to choose the old desires, which will corrupt you. You can choose the God given desires that are at work in you.

So by following the work of the spirit and partaking of God's nature, you no longer have to fulfill those old desires. And Peter calls that partaking of the divine nature. We escape with our lives, that corruption that is in the world through desires.

And when Jesus talked about the Holy spirit, and this is so important and it's so important for you, Jesse, it's so important for you, Jasmine. It's so important for Marie. It's so important for those who are considering in Christ only by being filled with the spirit, only by walking in the Holy spirit.

Can you walk in a power to keep you from being drawn down through the law of sin and death? What happens to an aircraft, an aircraft flying at 32,000 feet has overcome the law of gravity, right? As long as the engines are still running. What if there's no fuel? What if, what if the power, what if they lose power?

Well, suddenly the law of gravity takes back over and it's never a pretty picture when that does. So can you see why we're told as Christians be being filled with the Holy spirit? Man, because God is at work in you through the Holy spirit.

God is at work in you with his desires, the desire for kindness, the desire for humility, the desire for gentleness, the desire for meekness, the desire for lowliness, the desire for goodness. And I tell you, when we are being filled with the fruit of the spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control. When, when our lives are being filled with those things, the law of sin is being suppressed because we're walking in the power of God and doing the will of God, even though we still have that old man.

But what happens if we stop walking in the spirit? We don't walk in the spirit. Can you do something to kind of affect your walk in the spirit? Oh, yes, you can. Let me tell you what you can do.

The Bible warns about not grieving the Holy spirit. What does it mean to grieve? Well, I was out there early this morning watering because I forgot to water our front plant yesterday. And when you have several hundred degrees, what, 44 days in a row now, a hundred degrees in Texas, you better water what you have planted or it's not going to survive.

So I was pulling the hose along and the water's coming out fine. And I tried to pull it further and it suddenly it stopped. I turned the hose on, it was running just fine.

And I'm, I'm pulling on it and it just stopped barely nothing. What's happened? Has the water stopped flowing? No, there's a kink in the hose. You can grieve the Holy spirit.

You can put a kink in. How do you, how do you do that? How do you kink the Holy spirit? Here's one, here's one way Paul warned about this. And I've talked about this often in our church.

Do not let any unwholesome talk proceed forth out of your mouth. Only what is good for building up others according to me and that ministers grace to people. And then he goes on to say, and do not grieve the spirit of God, put away all anger, wrath, bitterness, arguing.

You know what grieves the Holy spirit? When we get, when we give into that old nature and we start getting angry, we start getting bitter. We, we, we turn on the people that we love. We start fighting.

We, we, our mouth gets loose. One of the first scriptures I tried to teach my children growing up is he who guards his lips, guards his life. A man is ensnared by the words of his own mouth.

The Bible says a whole lot about our speech. Jesus said this, Jesus says, what comes out of the mouth is what comes from the heart. And he said, a man defiles himself by the things he allows to come from his heart and out of his mouth.

And when we give into those old corrupted desires, we start running at the mouth and we start acting on that. The old nature, it grieves the Holy spirit temporarily. He can't force us.

What do you want God to do? Put you in a headlock. You want him to suddenly appear and just put his hand over your mouth. It's not the way he works, but the spirit immediately on the inside will try to tell you, don't say that.

Don't go there. Get ahold of that. You're in danger.

Remember, anger is only one letter away from danger. And every time we are angry, we are very dangerous people because the Bible says that man's anger never produces the righteousness of God. That's why we need the power of the spirit called self-control.

We don't have it within ourselves, but the Holy spirit will act on us like a set of reins, like on a horse, just kind of gently pulling back because the Bible says this, that no temptation has taken us, but such is common demand. The Lord is faithful. He won't let us be tempted above what we're able, but along with the temptation, he provides a way of escape, but you know how that way of escape comes to us.

It's the spirit of God inside of us saying, don't go there. That's not a good response. Be still resist that.

The Bible talks about resisting the devil and he will flee. Sometimes we just have to resist. We're going to have to know, don't give into that.

You feel the agitation. You feel stirred up. The law of sin is there, but there's another power.

The Bible says is if you will walk by the spirit, you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. So you may feel it. You may sense it, but listen, if you're tempted to sin or you're, you're battling anger, you've not sinned yet.

You only sin. If you give in only, if you give in the sin happened, but if you will listen to the Holy spirit, if you will learn to be led by the Holy spirit, he will guide you to the way of escape. And if you become strong in spirit and you grow up and you get stable, you know, children, uh, we all get excited when they first walk, don't we? I mean, they're taking their first steps and they're wobbling all over the place.

They're so unstable. We're almost afraid if they get on level ground, they're going to hurt themselves, but we are happy because we say they are beginning to walk. Sometimes our walk in the Holy spirit looks like that.

It looks pretty unsteady at first, but you keep walking and you're, you develop out because you know, little kids, their heads, the biggest part of their body is why they're top heavy. But if you grow in Christ and a lot of times for young Christians, that's a problem too. You can get too much head knowledge and it makes you, it makes you unstable.

But if you grow in Christ, your balance improves, your strength improves, you get stable. And what happens? You fall less and less and less. And now not only can you walk, you can run.

And if you develop that, we've seen what gymnasts can do when you train yourself and you discipline yourself. It's amazing what the human body can do. Same spiritually, when you develop spiritually, when you grow spiritually, when you become strong spiritually, what you're able to do in the Lord is amazing, but you have to walk and you have to grow and you have to strengthen it, but always begins.

And it should always stay in the spirit. And here's the thing about the spirit that not nearly as many of us fully grasp as we need to. Here's what Jesus said about the disciples or to his disciples.

That is, remember he told, and I've said this before, but I'm going to say it again. And so that if something ever happens to me, you'll never forget it. I want you to be able to remember this in case suddenly I'm not here someday.

And you find out what happened. Oh, sorry, brother Al's no longer here. Shouldn't bother us too.

I mean, we could be sad, but there's person that the main person is still here is the Lord Jesus and his Holy spirit. That hasn't changed. Here's what Jesus told the disciples.

One time he said, it's better for you that I go away. I mean, can you imagine they were how stunned they were at that? You, I mean, come on, Jesus, none of us can do anything. You're the one with all the power.

How in the world can it be better for you, for us that you go away. And here's what he said, because unless I go, I can't sit. The Holy spirit can't come.

See when Jesus was here on the earth physically, as God's son, the spirit of God was in him and all the power of God was in him. And that's why he was able to do all the things he did, but that's where he was in a physical human body. He's limited to being in one place at one time.

If Jesus was in Nazareth, he couldn't be in Jerusalem. If he was in Galilee, he wouldn't down in Judea as long as he was still in that physical body. But he said, when I returned to the father, I'm going to say my spirit and the spirit of God is not limited to being in one place at one time, the spirit of God and the spirit of Jesus allows all of Jesus to be with all of us all the time.

Isn't that great. Every one of us, Jesus gets to be with you in his spirit. And here's what Jesus said about his spirit.

He said, when he, the spirit of truth comes, here's what he's going to do. He's going to take from what is mine and share it with you. Yes.

You mean the power of Jesus, the Holy spirit is going to share Jesus's power with me. He's going to share Jesus's purity with me. The Holy spirit is going to share Jesus's meekness with me.

The Holy spirit is going to share the kindness of Jesus with me. And suddenly I'm going to be able to have the power that Jesus had through the Holy spirit, making it known to me so that it's not just Jesus died to forgive me for my sins is Jesus is with me through his Holy spirit. And he is literally enabling me to live in a new way.

Now that I'm in Christ through the spirit working in me, I'm a new creation. Old things are passing away and all things are becoming new because now God is at work in me. Sin wasn't working me before sin was causing me to do all the wrong things.

But now the spirit of the law of life in Christ. Now God is at work in me and I'm doing the things that God wants me to do. Not the things sin wanted me to do.

Isn't that beautiful. This is the good news of the gospel. And this is what the churches are supposed to teach the people that you have the spirit of God in you.

Isn't that what the prophet said? Isn't that what they celebrated on the day of Pentecost? We read it in the book of Acts when the Holy spirit fell upon the disciples that were there. Jesus had told his disciples, go back to the city and you stay there until you receive the Holy spirit because he knew they didn't have any power. He knew they needed power on the inside.

And so they went back to Jerusalem. They were praying in the upper room for 10 days. And on the day of Pentecost, the Holy spirit came upon them.

And you remember what Jesus told them? You will receive power when the Holy spirit comes on you. And the word for power is dunamis in the Greek. It's where we get our English word dynamic or dynamite.

And what it means is you will receive my ability when the Holy spirit comes upon you. Oh man, that's what we need. We don't just need Jesus dying on the cross for us.

Yes, we needed that to forgive us our sins and cleanse us, but to be a new creation, we need Jesus himself living in us. We need the Holy spirit taking his life, his nature and working that in us. That's Christianity.

That's living by the Holy spirit. And when you have that, when you realize that that's the goal for Christians, that's supposed to be the goal of the church where we, we introduce young believers. They begin in the spirit and we tell them to nourish yourselves, build yourselves up, grow in spirit, because when you grow in spirit and you learn to walk by the spirit and you're led by the spirit, you're God's sons.

God will teach you from now on. You won't be sucking the bottle that the pastor's offering you. Do y'all want me to pass out bottles? Is this supposed to be the big nursery? Let everybody get the pastor's bottle so he can feed us today.

That's not the way it's supposed to be. The Bible says in the last days that every single one, I will pour out my spirit on all flesh, my sons and daughters, my maids and maidservants, all, I will pour out my spirit on them all. And here's what it says about that.

And when, when God's spirit is poured out on all of us, here's what he said. Then you're not going to be as dependent upon a man teaching another man, saying, know the Lord, because every single one of them with my spirit is going to know me. They're going to have their own personal relationship with me.

And God wants to be your teacher. God wants to be your guide. God wants to be your personal counselor.

He doesn't want me to be that. I'm supposed to help you get you to that place to where you realize that's his job. He doesn't want me standing in his place and doing his work.

It's kind of like I'm supposed to be the adult. I'll hold onto your hand while you're still a little unsteady, but you keep walking. And as soon, the more stable you get, what do I do? I'll let go.

And I'll let you go. And you walk in the spirit and you do the will of God. Just, it's so important.

And that's why Paul goes on to say in the book of Romans, since we live by the spirit, let's keep in step, keep in step with the spirit. Don't fall out of step. You need the Holy Spirit every day.

You know, and you need that alertness. Hopefully when you come here, you're anticipating hearing a message. You're anticipating receiving help.

You're anticipating being inspired. You're anticipating being directed. You can have that every day.

You can have that every single day with the Holy Spirit in you. He can guide you. He can direct you.

He can be with you. He can encourage you. He can protect you.

And that's what I want for you. And that's why it's so important, Jesse. That's why it's so important for Marie.

It's why it's so important, Jasmine. You learn to walk in the spirit. Because your friends and I won't be there.

I can't be with you everywhere. Your mom won't be with you everywhere. You're going to find yourself without another physical believer somewhere, but you know, you'll never find yourself.

You'll never find yourself a single place where the Lord Jesus is not there. You'll never find a spot where the Holy Spirit is not there to guide you. And that's why we need to learn that where it began, we began in the spirit.

Let's stay and continue in the spirit. Amen.

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