

Hindrances to Walking in the Spirit

by Ralph Sutera

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith and obedience in walking in the Spirit, and warns against the hindrances of Satan and living by feelings rather than faith.

Topics: "Walking In Spirit", "Flesh Vs Spirit"

Description

Ralph Sutera preaches on the importance of walking in the Spirit, emphasizing the distinction between the cross of Christ and the world, where the cross marks a separation from worldly influences. He highlights the need to surrender to God completely, allowing Him to take care of relationships and influences. Sutera discusses the hindrances to walking in the Spirit, such as living by feelings, delayed obedience, negative influences, and the ongoing battle between the flesh and the Spirit. He stresses the importance of agreeing with God about crucifying the flesh, walking in the Spirit, and manifesting the fruit of the Spirit through love and service to one another.

Transcript

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Gal. 6:14

We've heard about the importance of walking in the Spirit, and it is so vital to what God wants to do. In the above scripture we find that the cross is the mark of distinction between me and the world. Sometimes I hear people say, "I want to walk with God but I don't know how I could ever give up my friends." And my answer to that is very simple: If you begin to walk with the Lord, you won't have to worry about giving up your friends; you won't have time for that--they will give you up first. That is how the cross is a mark of distinction.

I am not saying you are to be antagonistic to the world, and that you will lose all your friendships or relationships, but you don't have to make it a problem to worry about. You walk with God and let Him take care of that, and He will keep in your life all those He wants to influence or help you.

The Apostle Paul is saying that the cross is where the action is. This truth comes in the last chapter of Galatians, but look what kind of advice he had to give them: "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" (Gal. 5:7) Paul says, "You understood something about the message of the cross, and I love the cross, but who hindered you?" Satan does, as seen in I Peter 5:8, "...your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:" He hinders and interferes in

relation to our walking with God. The nearer we get to the cross the more fierce and hot the battle, because the devil can't stand it when we live our life at the foot of the cross. Satan uses his forces and oppressive spirits to hinder us from walking in the Spirit.

I'll never forget a statement made by a lady in which she said, "I died last night, but the devil is giving me artificial respiration." Satan is out to disrupt our surrendered rights. He didn't die just because you've come to the end of your self-sufficiency. But remember that this chapter began with, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (5:1). Then in verse 13, "Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." It is a divine call to liberty and we are to stand fast in that liberty.

James 1:22-24 says, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving you own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." Now you might be able to look in a mirror, walk away and forget what you saw, but I have a hard time doing that, because when I look in a mirror I have to look at another one (my twin) who looks just like me. But the apostle is reminding us of the tragedy of not being a doer of the Word.

It goes on to say in verse 25, "But whoso looked into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed." That word "perfect" is an interesting word, and most cases in the New Testament it has the connotation or meaning of not perfec-tion of our actions but maturity of our lifestyle. So, whoever looks into the mature law of liberty realizes that it has the ability to make us mature. It's a growing-up kind of liberty, a continuing in the liberty wherewith Christ has set us free.

That almost sounds like a paradox--perfect law of liberty. How do you put law and liberty together? We understand that wherever there is law, there is no liberty; but the liberty of the Lord that God gives us is not freedom to run loose, but it's the ability to walk straight. That's the perfect law of liberty. It is the ability to walk in a way that, up until now, we've not been able to walk even though we tried.

A man thought he had liberty so he just went around punching everybody in the nose. He said that he lives in a free land. One day he came up to me and began to punch me in the nose, but I reached out and grabbed his wrist just before he landed on my nose and he said to me, "What are you doing? I have liberty; I have freedom, and I can do anything I want to do." I turned to him and said, "Your liberty ends where my nose begins." Any concept of liberty that thinks you can just run loose and wild or do whatever you want and be your own god, dictate your own terms because you feel you have liberty in the Lord, and you become an authority as to what God's plan is for you and everyone else, is not it. It's the ability to walk straight--the maturing process that God longs for us to see.

An interesting letter was received from a woman who is now in heaven. It is from Mrs. Edith Edmond, wife of Dr. V. Edmond, Chancellor and president of Wheaton College. She has prayed for us and written us letters. When she heard we were going to a church where some of her friends were pastors, she wrote to them.

I rejoice, and am rejoicing of hearing God's mighty working in your midst in the past weeks. I remember when I started praying for the special services. I would constantly remind myself of the Lord's using the Sutura twins in the great revival that swept northwest part of Canada and into the United States, even spreading down to Portland and Salem, Oregon. How I would yearn that it might be your portion, too.

Now comes this glorious news of what God is doing in your midst. Oh how I'd love to be there, but am satisfied to rejoice in spirit. I talked to some who understand, and they have shed tears of joy, followed by for that we pray too. We also know who looks on in deep hatred and will do all he can to hinder and to destroy every way possible.

I don't know if you heard about the great revival in Wheaton in 1950 when we were twenty hours in the presence of God. The last night, early in the morning, Dad Edmond left to go home for a little rest and left me to continue with the testimonies, etc. How well I recall about three o'clock in the morning there were a few students that had strayed in and stood up to speak. When they started to speak I immediately sensed an alien spirit had come in, so immediately was led to bring the service to a close. Then in the morning when the evangelist came over for devotions and we three had been definitely led (there was time for public services to close and classes to resume), Dad went over and made the announcement to as many as were still gathered at Pierce Chapel. I believe you both know that Dad was very sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Well, what the enemy couldn't destroy with unclean spirits, then came one of the worst ice storms we ever had, breaking down all the electrical wires so the college was without heat, lights and water for two to six days. It was very difficult, but the Lord over-ruled in this. Downtown many were gleeful and felt it served us right [See how the enemy tried to interfere!] I just speak of this as a warning.

Then, too, there is the area that now you are to feed the flock of God as never before. That would be for all ages... "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30). [She is warning this pastor and his wife.] Remember after the great awakening in North Hampton, Massachusetts, Jonathan Edwards was desperately maligned by a few who were not stirred by the revival. After it was over, they arose against Jonathan Edwards, and even had him banished from his church. Therefore, Paul knew God's weapons that alone could pull down every stronghold of Satan. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers..." I only write this because I love you so dearly in the Lord and long that this is only the beginning for you and your flock, and that it will be the beginning of a great pouring out over our land of the wonderful fire of Pentecost.

In His glorious service, Edith Edmond.

A warning: Satan is the one behind all the hindrances. How does he do it? Let us go back to Galatians 5, where it gives FOUR HINDRANCES TO WALKING IN THE SPIRIT:

1. LIVING BY YOUR FEELINGS AND NOT BY FAITH, vs. 4-6

"For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision: but faith which worketh by love." Oh the importance of learning not to live your Christian life by the way you feel.

Feelings come and feelings go

And feelings are deceiving,

My warrant is the Word of God,

Nought else is worth believing.

Though all my heart should feel condemned

For want of some sweet token,
There is One greater in my heart
Whose Word can not be broken.
I'll stand upon His unchanging Word,
Till soul and body sever.
For tho' all things shall pass away,
His Word shall stand forever.

A hypochondriac told his doctor in great alarm that he was sure he had a fatal liver disease. And the doctor said, "Nonsense, nonsense, you would never know that you had the disease or not. With that ailment there is no discomfort of any kind." And the hypochondriac turned to the doctor and said, "I knew, doctor," as he gasped deeply, "Those are my symptoms exactly--no feeling of any kind." It's amazing how we get so stuck in the mud by the way we feel, and God has to set us free. The word "feeling" is only mentioned twice in the whole Bible, and neither time does it have anything to do with our salvation.

If you live by your feelings,
It will lead you into a lifestyle of unbelief.
The if's move next door to the tomorrow's,
And the uncertainty's were doubtful about the worry's.
The frustrations struggled with the imaginary's,
And Mr. Nerve said to the hostility's
That the maybe's quit.
The problem is that most of us,
Believe our doubts and doubt our beliefs
When we should be doing just the opposite--
We should be doubting our doubts and believing our beliefs.

A pastor who wrote us to come to his church said,

My concern is about my church family, that we would experience a tremendous working of God's Holy Spirit in our midst. In the midst of everything I am convinced that we are keenly aware of the ministry of the Holy Spirit and His continuous work in us, and that we can see the work of God continue here. Somehow we seemed to have lost the experience of transformation and have become satisfied with an all to mediocre Christianity. Could it be that our self-satisfied complacency is really a spirit of unbelief? What does it take to renew the spirit of devotion in the people of God? Will the Lord use you to help us in this area?

When the devil seeks to keep us in turmoil by not believing, and to go by our feelings that change constantly, we understand how he wants to rob us of so much of what God has for us. The Bible tells us that there is joy and peace in feeling. Is that right? No! There is joy and peace in believing (Rom. 15:13). For some their joy is gone the moment they start living by their feelings. Joy and peace is in believing, and we are to receive the Holy Spirit by faith in our lives. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:" (Col. 2:6). You received Him by faith; therefore walk by faith.

Galatians 3:14 talks about receiving the "promise of the Spirit through faith." Faith is what pleases God, for "without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). We don't need a certain feeling, but faith.

Do you have a problem with belief in the existence of God? If ever there would be room for doubting, it certainly should be on the existence of God--believing in Someone we cannot see, touch, Who does not live next door. If ever there is room for doubt, the most magnanimous thought that could cross our brain has become so simple--to accept. God is saying: "He who comes to Me must believe that I exist. This is the greatest and deepest truth, the most high and profound truth. If I have made the most profound truth simple for you to be able to enter into and accept, then everything else can come easier. If you can believe that I exist, then why not believe that I mean what I say and I say what I mean, and I will reward you if you accept that--believe." "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1).

We can believe about the existence of God, but it's hard for us to believe for unsaved loved ones. Some of us really start to believe it when we see them come to church for six weeks in a row. We see them, and in the truest sense at that very point, there is something about faith that has been diminished, because now we are already going by sight. We are such victims of walking by sight. Faith believes that the thing is done, even before there's the first sign that it is begun. Faith accepts the work to be done when every human sign says you are a fool for believing it because the opposite is happening. Faith looks into the darkest night and sees the brightness of dawn while looking at the darkest night. [Faith is like the bird that knows there will be light and sings when the dawn is still dark.]

Faith gives a good report. Hebrews 11 is the Hall of Fame for the heroes of faith. That means that they got an A+ on their report card. Even though they got an A+, they did not even enter in, because God has provided some better thing for us. They, without us, are not complete. God has something better for us than they experienced. Oh, how far below God's normal we live. Why? Because we've not yet learned that faith lives in God's highest tower. Ephesians 6 says, "above all, take the shield of faith...." Once we've got every piece of armor on for the battle, there is one piece that is above all--faith. Because faith makes every part of the armor to function. It's agreeing with God that we are walking by faith. Faith lives in God's highest tower of protection, because we are not subject to all the winds and fancies and feelings and experiences of everybody around.

Some go by wonderful experiences they've had, and they say that they just accept things by faith. I'd rather go by way of the engine rather than the caboose. I'd rather go first class rather than at the tail end. Faith doesn't take a back seat to anybody. It lives in God's highest tower, and God needs to set us free from depending on anything else but the simplicity of walking by faith. We are commanded to walk by faith, and if we are not walking that way then we are disobeying a command of Almighty God.

FEELING, FAITH, AND FACT

Three men were walking on a wall,
Feeling, Faith, and Fact.
When Feeling got an awful fall,
Then Faith was taken back.
So close to Faith was Feeling,
He stumbled and fell too.
But, Fact remained--and pulled Faith back,
And Faith brought Feeling too.

What is the distinction between faith and feeling?

Faith affects the divine side of my life;

Feeling affects the human side of my life.

Faith reaches outside and beyond myself;

Feeling remains inside and never goes beyond myself.

Faith is the spirit of man (spiritual man);

Feeling is the soul of man (soul or selfness part of man).

Faith rests on the changeless character of God;

Feeling relates to the changing circumstances within and around us.

Here is the key: "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 15:57). It is a gift--He "giveth." A gift does not depend on my feeling but on my receiving. Faith is claimed by faith and has nothing to do with your feeling or anyone else.

My faith has found a resting place,

Not in device nor creed;

I trust the Everliving One,

His wounds for me shall plead.

I need no other argument,

I need no other plea,

It is enough that Jesus died,

And that He died for me.

-- Lidie H. Edmunds

2. FAILURE IN SIMPLE OBEDIENCE, vs. 7

"Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" You got off to a good start. Who hindered you that you did not obey? There is no such thing as instant maturity, but there must be instant obedience. That's the growing process. You started right--why didn't you obey? Is delayed obedience the same as obedience? Do you think that God will run a person's life that constantly argues with Him?

This can be illustrated by a parent who says, "Daughter, take out the garbage." "Yes, Mother" or "Yes, Dad." And ten minutes later, "Daughter, the garbage." "Yes, Mother." And a half hour later, "What about the garbage?" Delayed obedience is disobedience. And then you get so tired of asking that you do it yourself. Will God continue to run a life that keeps on delaying obedience? God is calling us to obedience. The prayer of the committed believer needs to be: "Yes, Lord, What else?" Then you are saying, "Lord, I'm giving you the answer, and there is no kick in my spirit; I will not argue with You. And Lord, and what else? Give me the plan and details." We used to say, "God, what is it You're after and then I'll decide whether it will be yes or no." That's walking in the flesh, a spirit of disobedience, just like that daughter who wasn't sure she wanted to take out the garbage. Instead, my life is now going to be a constant "yes" to the Lord. The answer is yes before He even asks the question.

Spiritual victory comes when we agree with God; instead, we keep arguing with Him. The Spirit's ministry in my life can only be possible when I agree with God--when we no longer ask God to reveal His will so we can analyze whether or not we're going to obey. Our prayers should not be in contest with God. "Lord, teach us to stop arguing with Thee." Charles Finney said it this way:

The beginning of spiritual reality is total commitment to Christ, evidenced by a desire to obey Him. The maintenance and development of spiritual vitality is through daily fellowship which results in a life of obedience and spiritual power.

What kind of obedience? Obedience regarding being willing to forgive, willing to make restitution and reconciliation in some things we've harbored for years. If you want your reviving to continue, are you going to obey God when He puts His finger on a specific area in your life?

Some think that they now have a hot line to heaven and say, "If God shows me something then I will do it, but if God doesn't show it to me directly, it doesn't make any difference what someone else has said, but God has to speak to me directly." Be careful that you don't have that attitude of pride, a superiority or pride of grace, and figure God is going to send some direct line from heaven before you obey, when there are some clear-cut commandments to obey in the Word.

If you asked me what is the most difficult time in your life as far as being in the ministry, my answer is--when we are home from the crusades for a short period of time, and then we're right back into another one. We have to shift gears suddenly from being on the "glory road" to all at once being husband and father; we find out where the rubber meets the road, how the children had to be spanked while we were gone--and we wanted to tell them all about the victories. Our wife will say, "Can you stop long enough to listen to some of the hardships I've been through while you've been gone?" There have been times they've said, "The more you talk, the worst we feel for what we've had to go through the whole time you were gone." Shifting gears is very difficult. Sometimes it causes tension in the home.

It was one of those times between a crusade that I was going through tension and a real spirit of disunity in the home. My wife and our daughter, three people living under the same roof, but we were going in different directions. Sunday morning we went to the church service. The pastor preached on why God came through the power of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. He talked about how they were united, and the unity of the believers allowed the Spirit to be at home in that kind of atmosphere. At the end of the service there was a real sense of conviction in the whole congregation, and the pastor gave an invitation and nobody responded. Through the years of being in the services and sitting and listening, that was the day that superseded any other day in my life where my heart was pounding to the place I could almost hear it. With conviction I recognized that that message was right for me all the way. Nobody else needed it nearly as much as I did. After coming home from revival meetings, where the church people had been praying for us, and I gave them a report of what God did in the meetings, how do I respond and go to the altar and admit that kind of a sin in my own home? Guess who won out? My pride. I walked out of that meeting, and pride is so insidious when we are delaying obedience that it will do everything to cover itself up--nobody else responded to the invitation.

The first man I met was a banker friend whom we knew in the church. I said to him, "It was a great sermon we heard this morning. The Spirit of God was really at work in this place. It seemed as if someone was blocking the moving of the Spirit when it came time for the invitation." I said that! Why? so he wouldn't think I was the culprit. The next Sunday came and my heart pounded again, and I resisted again. The next Sunday came and I couldn't stand it any longer, but that two weeks of my life was as if the sky was brass, and the disunity problem in my home was worse than ever. For two weeks it was as if nobody would move. At the close of the service I walked to the front and asked the pastor if I could say a few words to the congregation. I said to the congregation that I had not instantly obeyed the voice of the Spirit two weeks earlier, thereby blocking the moving of the Spirit in our congregation. I asked the congregation and pastor to forgive me, and then asked the pastor and some elders to pray with me as I knelt in dealing with that sin of pride that took over my life.

I didn't know what was going on around me because I was dealing with God over this issue. When I finished praying I stood up and looked--the altar was lined with people who were on their knees meeting God. If ever a lesson came home forcibly, that was one I'll never forget. Any spirit of delayed action in obedience to what God is saying could literally tie the hands of God in a congregation. It could tie the hands of God to another individual's life! Your obedience could become contagious, just as your disobedience could become a hinderance to the working of God among other people. J. Wilbur Chapman said,

It's not the ship in the water, but the water in the ship that sinks it. It's not the Christian in the world, but the world in the Christian that constitutes the danger. Anything that dims my vision of Christ or takes away my taste for Bible study or cramps my prayer life or makes Christian work difficult is wrong for me. As a Christian I must deal with it, turn from it.

3. ALLOWING OTHERS TO HINDER YOU, vs. 7

This scripture verse is saying, "Do you really let other people keep you from obeying?" How easy it is for us to be used to keep other people from obeying as well as allow other people to keep us from obeying. Friendships, relationships--oh the seriousness of seeing to it that you surround yourself with people who are not going to be hindering you but rather helping you to walk in the Spirit.

I tell young people to do themselves a favor and find someone in your youth group who is closer to God than you are, someone they look up to and admire spiritually, and make that kind of a person a close friend so that by being with that person there is only one way you can go and that is upward. What kind of relationships do you allow?

And in verse 9 it goes on to speak of "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Leaven has several different meanings, but one of them is danger--allowing one influence to rob you of what God wants you to be. I need to warn you about well-meaning people that may come as an angel of light who will detract you from the beauty of the simplicity of walking in the Spirit by faith and obedience. All kinds of people want you to seek this manifestation, and go after this, and begin to move in this direction, and then say, "Now it's wonderful in how far you've gone, but now come along with us and we'll take you a step farther." And they take you away from the simplicity of walking by faith. Be sensitive to relationships around you that can discourage you.

An example is in our pastor's young son who wrote the book, *I Wish You Could Meet My Mom and Dad*. God dealt with him powerfully about rock music, and then God used him to see others delivered from rock music. He had a program called Rock, Stock, and Barrel. He said, "Let's get all the rock music, let's stock it altogether and put it in this barrel. Then we'll have a bonfire." He was with us in a crusade, and before the crusade was over we had a burning ceremony of seventeen thousand dollars worth of rock music, romance novels, T-shirts with all kinds of insidious remarks on them, sex manuals written by humanistic philosophers, etc. He was so encouraged to see so many people set free from all kinds of garbage. And then he gets a letter. The devil seeks to distort what God wants to do in our lives, and a "Christian" college student wrote,

Dear Tom, I happened to see one of your recent newsletters and was very surprised to find out about your program, Rock, Stock and Barrel. I think many young people need to think about the music they listen to. Something spoke to me about the recent record burnings, and I just had to share it with you. Instead of burning the records, why not box them up and send them to me? I'd be willing to pay you one dollar a pound for records in good condition. I've always liked music but have not always had enough money for the records I like. I could easily afford one dollar a pound and you would have extra money to help support your ministry or give to youth who are needy. I feel that by turning this destructive, wasteful demonstration into an ecological profitable concern, many people would be moved to join your side and maybe even sponsor Rock, Stock and Barrel's of their own. I'll wait to hear from you about my idea and receive my first shipment of records. Also, I think it's only fair that we split the shipping costs which wouldn't be much if sent by truck.

Yours sincerely...

Young people as well as adults, if you are going to walk in the Spirit it may necessitate a change of your relationships right in your own church. Don't be harsh, but realize there will be all kinds of influences that will seek to distort and destroy what God is doing in your life by their negativism. You got off to a good start, but who did you allow to hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

4. ALLOWING THE FLESH TO WAR AGAINST THE SPIRIT, vs. 17

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." There is a war--the flesh against the Spirit--and these are two enemies contrary to each another; they will never be on the same team, never co-exist, and

there never will be a compromise.

I'll never forget the thrill in getting a certain letter. A young man, his wife and mother came one night to a meeting after seeing Lou and me being interviewed on television that day. She was so intrigued by what she heard and saw that when her husband came home she said, "I think we ought to go to this meeting that's here in town." Who was she? An agnostic, and her mother was a 64 year-old atheist. The husband had an evangelical background but was not living the Christian life. They had just moved to this community in Western Canada, and they were looking for friends that could be close to them. They were so lonely after moving from the east to the west, and they even put ads in the newspaper stating they were looking for friends. Somehow God used that television interview to catch their attention. That night he, she, and the mother-in-law were sitting in the third or fourth row right off the aisle. As Lou was speaking I noticed they were listening so intently that they hardly took their eyesight off of him, trying to grasp every word. As the service was over I walked by them and tapped him on the shoulder and said, "Nice to have you here tonight. Would you like to go to a house for coffee after the service tonight? I'll be at the back door shaking hands with people. When you come by let me know, as I would be glad for you to go to coffee."

I grabbed a hold of one of the men in the church, and his wife, and said, "Go home and put the coffee pot on; we're coming. And invite two or three other couples from the church to come." When this family came by to shake hands with me at the back door, he said, "Is that offer still good?" I said, "Yes." That night those people listened to the couples in the church as to what God was doing in their lives. God was creating such a hunger as we continued on. It was twelve or one o'clock in the morning and they were asking all kinds of questions, and they said, "We've never been among people like this; we've been looking for friends. Can we do this again tomorrow night?" So they came back and we had 30 people in the home, with wall-to-wall people in the basement. After asking all their questions, it was two o'clock in the morning when they left us to go home. Some questions were difficult, and showed us how much they were in the agnostic philosophy. But this was just a camouflage. As she left she tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Would you send somebody to our house tonight?" So I, and with two or three other people, walked in that house with that husband, wife, and mother-in-law sitting in their living room just waiting. They started asking more questions, and at 4:30 in the morning we were on our knees around a coffee table with those three opening their hearts to receive Christ. It was so beautiful.

Years later I said to that elderly woman who was an atheist, who never had a Bible in her life, but who became such a tremendous prayer warrior, "Remember that night in the living room when all three of you were reaching for the Kleenex box at one time?" But she quickly straightened me out, "Kleenex nothing--it was a towel I was using."

That couple and mother-in-law grew so powerfully the next several months. Four months after he was saved this is the letter I received--

It's difficult to look back just four months and try to remember my old narrow ways of thinking and how I used to treat others. As you know, my old world consisted of working hard to accumulate money so that I could out-do my neighbor and try to buy happiness. Because of my business success, ego and pride were strong traits of the old self. I lived under constant worry and frustration, but I was convinced that I could overcome these problems by buying material things, expensive clothes, cars, vacations. My marriage relationship wasn't what it should be, so there were many fears that we didn't discuss, and these caused us to drift apart. Even my kids were drifting away from me because I just didn't seem to have time for

them. It's amazing that we can get so wrapped up in worldly things that we forget the real things of life.

Today I know what the abundant life is all about. To walk daily with Jesus Christ leading me is a wonderful and exciting experience. Naturally with the "old nature" out of the way God can use me completely, where before He had no part of me. I no longer worry about the future--money and family relationships. My marriage is better than ever, even our honeymoon days. My kids say their dad is different. It's a joy to have my twelve year-old climb up upon my lap and we just talk to each other.

I don't know where God is leading me, but if the growth of experience in the last four months is any indication of the future, I can look forward to a wonderful life with God. All I can do is keep myself cleansed of new daily sins and to be available to God. This way God can use me. My Christian life has been a daily process of realizing that as long as I keep self out of my life and let God have control, life becomes very good.

I feel that God is leading me in a route that sometime in the future He will want to use me in some bigger way. Since my Bible background was nil I felt I should get busy and seriously study. I was receiving knowledge in the church and Bible studies, but the growing process was too slow." [And it goes on telling how many hours now he spends studying the Word of God. Then he says,]

It is so wonderful to see how God can handle things once we give Him the chance. It is quite difficult for Him to run things when we continue to live a selfish, self-centered life and try to run things ourselves. It bothers me to see "old time" Christians who continue to hang on to their old nature and deprive God from using them. After becoming a Christian and started mixing into church circles I soon discovered that approximately twenty-five of my clients were also Christians. The thing that surprised me is that none of these Christians ever shared their faith with me while I was in their homes on business. Several of these people were pastors and church elders. At first I couldn't understand why they kept their faith to themselves, but I now realize that unless you are filled with the Holy Spirit, it is very difficult to share Christ with anyone, as the flesh has too many hang-ups.

Here is a man only four months old in the Lord, yet some of us have not yet learned in forty years. The flesh will always war against the Spirit. The flesh will never be improved, and as long as you cater to that self-life and give that self-life room to operate, there will never be the abundance of life God longs for us to have. You did run well; you got off to a good start. Why did you allow the flesh to hinder you? The abundant life is available, so what is the solution in the chapter?

! Agree with God about death to all that self-life, verse 24, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

God says it's a fact. Agree with Him about it. Say to God, "I'm sick and tired of living the life of the affections and lusts of the flesh being gratified, and God, by the act of my will I'm going to live the life of a dead man--crucified with Christ." That's where it starts.

! Walk in the Spirit as well as live in the Spirit, verse 16 "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." And verse 25, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

If we are born again we say we live in the Spirit--the Holy Spirit lives within us. It's one thing to say the Holy Spirit lives within us, and it's quite another thing to say, "Thank God He not only lives within us but I'm walking in the Spirit." It's taking steps in the Spirit, and walking that kind of a lifestyle that causes us not to

have to fulfill the lust of the flesh. The difference is between the One Who is resident within you and now making Him President within you.

THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO IS RESIDENT

NOW BECOMES PROMINENT AND

PREDOMINATE AS HE REVEALS CHRIST.

It's the assistant manager being fired. A man wrote to his friend, "Something has happened to me. I have a new manager running my life now. The assistant manager has been fired." And he describes the assistant manager as being himself--self. He said, "That's because the assistant manager is too close to becoming manager, the temptation to take over." If there is a president of a company there is a vice president who wants to take over, hoping the president will either die or move on--always striving for that top spot. So if the Holy Spirit lives within us, then let's make sure that we're going to live in such a way that we can walk in that Spirit. And the only way we can walk in that Spirit is no longer challenge His rights to control us. Surrender all the weapons of a rebel--self and all its demands--and by faith begin to take steps in the Spirit. When that becomes a reality then--

! The fruit of the Spirit will become manifest, verses 22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

These are now manifest when we are walking in the Spirit and not fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. That's what the world needs to see. I was so delighted when someone told me about people in a church that had just blossomed. It reminded me that Satan is also working. When all this is true--we agree with God about death, we walk in the Spirit as well as say that the Spirit lives within us, the fruit of the Spirit becomes manifested--THEN the ability is there to serve one another by love (vs. 13). "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." It is only as you walk in the Spirit that that fruit which is genuine love can pull out of you to serve one another in the body.

Liberty, freedom, holiness--the daily walk. To be holy, you must be free--perfectly free for Jesus to rule you, free for the Holy Spirit to dispose of you, to breathe in you, to work His secret but gentle mighty work within you so that you may be able to grow up unto all the liberty He has already won for you and me.

The perfect law of liberty, Matthew 11:28-30, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." A yoke is liberty that otherwise you might have, had it not been for the yoke. A yoke ties two animals together, constrained, yoked. They've got to move together. Jesus says, "When you take My yoke upon you, you will find that My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

The word "burden" is synonymous with the word "heaviness." It seems like a contradiction--my burden is light. Every burden should be heavy, but when you are yoked, tied, linked to the Lord of Life, the worst that we will ever go through walking in yoke to Jesus Christ is better than the best we could ever experience walking in the flesh.

To illustrate, I see two people sitting together. She chased you, and chased you until you caught her. When you walked down the aisle the pastor said, "Wilt thou..." and you wilted. He said, "For better or for

worse"--better for her, worse for you. "For richer or for poorer"--for poorer. "Until death do us part"--if you've ever heard anything more confining and binding than that, I don't know what it is. And when you wear that ring, it is a symbol of that lasting bond--yoked to each other. You used to be a free man, now you are in bondage. If you look at another woman you get kicked under the table. Before you could go out with other people or play golf all day or spend time with the boys, and not worry about coming home to hearing her say, "Where were you all day today?" Talk about being yoked and bondage.

When you got married the pastor said, "May all your troubles be little ones," and you have three of them. Now it's dishes and diapers, waxing floors, taking out the garbage. Before, others did that for you. And when I walk in the house I see you on your hands and knees scrubbing the floor, etc., and I say, "You're not only in bondage, but in slavery now." Someone has said, "A man's life is never complete until he gets married." One man said, "I never knew happiness until I got married, and then it was too late." The Jewish rabbi at a wedding said, "There are three things that happen in a man's life: he is born, gets married, and then he dies. You were born, today you get married, so there is nothing left for you to do but die." And I look at you and say, "Look at the bondage and slavery you are in." Then you look up at me with a smile and say, "This is not bondage, this is not slavery; all this is is a beautiful, simple labor of love." And I look and say to you, "How insane have you gotten!" It's dishes, diapers, waxing floors, yet you say it is a beautiful labor of love. And you turn to me and say, "If you'd only know of the wonderful relationship I have with my wife, you'd understand that this is merely an expression of love."

I've come to the conclusion that walking in the Spirit is to allow that spiritual love that is only available through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, pour out of you and back to God on a daily basis, where you just keep falling in love with Him every day. Then watch--every thing He commands of you will be a desire on your heart to do. It will no longer be a burden or drudgery. It will be serving Him because I cannot do enough to express my love. And the only way to express it is to do those thing that please Him because of His love for me. It is a perfect law of liberty. Being in bondage to Jesus Christ is the only way we can be free, not to do as we please, but to do as God pleases us. And I am pleased when I am pleasing Him. He changes your pleaser. That's the perfect law of life and love.

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