



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

TRANSCRIPT

“Progressive Sanctification, part II:

Practical Aspects of the Work, Special Aspects of the Work”

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the ministry of the Holy Spirit to us, particularly his ministry of sanctification. And we thank Thee that we have the hope and assurance that one day it shall be completed. And in the meantime, Lord, may through his power, may we be enabled to glorify Thee. And through the trials of life and through the joys of life, may it be evident that he is having his ministry within us. We commit this hour of Bible study to Thee and ask his blessing upon us.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Tonight, I hope is our final study in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And the subject is: The Holy Spirit's work of Sanctifying Believers: the Practical Aspects of the Work.

And I think since we are becoming near the end of our study that we should have a little bit of a review over what we have done up to this point. And I'm thinking particularly of this ministry of sanctification.

Now, first of all, remember, we sought to clear up some of the confusion concerning the filling of the Spirit. I tried to point out that in the Old Testament it is a

term for enduement with power. It was not then regarded as normal Christian experience. It marked exceptional control for special purposes. In the New Testament, it is used in the same way. That is, of enduement of power or special purposes. It often was associated with spiritual utterance. It was not regarded as normal Christian experience in the New Testament.

In considering the special problem in Ephesians chapter 5 in verse 18, it was pointed out that the text should be rendered, first of all, be filled in the spirit, not with the spirit. And as a matter of fact, that precise Greek expression is never found in the sense of being filled with the Spirit, so the Spirit is not the content of the filling. We are not to think of a glass of water filled with water and overflowing as the filling with the spirit is so often likened. That is false terminology of Ephesians 5:18.

The specifics of the filling referred to in that one text are found in the context in the four clauses of manner. You’ll remember I put the outline on the board to show you that to be filled in the spirit, as Paul puts it in Ephesians, is to be manifesting, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. It is to be singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. It is to be giving thanks always to all things unto God, and it is to be submitting yourselves, one to another, in the fear of God. And I also pointed out, in connection with that, that the passage does not concern the individual primarily, it concerned the corporate life of the local church for this singing, making melody in your heart, giving thanks, submitting is not an individual thing, primarily it was corporate. It was life in the local church. And what Paul really meant, in that particular instance, was that the Christians, as a group, should be filled in the spirit. Be filled in these ways, singing, making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks, submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of the Lord.

So that the idea that to be filled with the spirit is a normal Christian experience, something to be sought, something to be experienced, is not really true to the New Testament. I even suggested, and I still think it is true although I can not prove it, I don’t

think you can prove it otherwise, that this filling in the spirit referred to in Ephesians 5, is a filling that is to take place, particularly when the church comes together and observes the Lord’s Supper. In other words, in the agape, as the early church called it, the love feast.

So we should stop thinking as Christians that the normal Christian experience is to be filled with the spirit. That is not so. The normal Christian experience is divine. The sanctifying ministry of the spirit to us and the human response is to live or walk by the spirit. And we will refer to that tonight.

So when we speak of a Christian who is living the standard -- the New Testament standard of life, we don’t say, “he is filled with the spirit,” we should say, “He is walking by the spirit.”

Now, I think we should have learned that if we’d just look through the New Testament and we had just seen how few times filling with the spirit if referred to, or filling in the spirit is referred to in the Pauline letters. As a matter of fact, this is the only place. And so that, in itself, should have suggested to us that it was not the norm of Christian living.

So in conclusion, I suggested that the term the “filling of the spirit,” refers to enduement of power. The term “filling in the spirit,” an almost unique usage, refers to congregation of life. Both terms then are too narrow in range to express the divine standard for Christian experience.

We therefore suggested that the climatic work of the Holy Spirit is not his ministry of filling but the climatic work of the Holy Spirit is his work of sanctifying.

Now this term “sanctifying” is broad enough to cover various operations of the spirit within the believer. And it covers the various operations that continue throughout his Christian experience that refer to Christian living. It includes such ministries as teaching, as part of his sanctifying ministry, assisting or helping the believer as part of the Spirit’s sanctifying ministry, his ministry of interceding, that is part of the ministry of the

spirit and sanctification. And particularly tonight, his ministry of leading. And that, too, is part of his ministry of sanctification, and we shall discuss these tonight. This is the divine side of the sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit. And then we want to tonight, touch briefly the human side, the believers responsibility to live or walk by the Spirit.

Now, another thing that we need to keep in mind constantly, in what we have been saying is this, it must be remembered that when we speak of the sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit that we are speaking of progressive sanctification. We have singled out that aspect of the four aspects of sanctification because that is the common aspect, and that is also the aspect of sanctification that has to do with how our spiritual growth and the Christian life, in particular. And we have discussed these aspects of its theology. We discussed its nature; that is, a supernatural work. It has its twofold aspect. It is pervasive in its influence. We discussed its characteristics.

The Spirit is the author of that work. The means include the word of God. The ordinances, providence, the completion is never accomplished in this life but is only accomplished when we come into the presence of the Lord. We discussed its relation to other stages of the *ordo salutis*. We saw, for example, that regeneration precedes sanctification and yet, at the same time, it is the basis of sanctification. We saw also its relationship to justification and its relationship to faith. And I tried to point out that faith is the principal of sanctification just as it is the principle of salvation. Just as we are saved by faith, we also grow by faith. And any progress, in the Christian life, is made by faith. In order that all that is done may be done by God and that we may recognize it as done by God.

Now, tonight we want to discuss, briefly, the practical and special aspects of this progressive sanctification. We know the spirit sanctifies, but what does that mean practically? We know he implants within us, a new life at regeneration, and we know that he nurtures it in its disposition. What is the precise character of this nurturing?

Now, we have already considered its teaching ministry, which is a part of its sanctifying ministry. What else can we say aside from the general fact that he performs his ministry work in us to its completion? Well, now I have suggested tonight, that there are three ways in which we may look at the practical ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit assists, the Spirit intercedes, and the Spirit leads.

Now, first of all, Roman I in our outline - The Spirit Assisting. I want you now to turn with me to Romans chapter 8, and let’s look at verses 26 and 27. Romans 8:26 and 27.

The apostle writes,

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity.” [By the way, that is singular in the Greek text, Helpth our infirmity.] “For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit,”

Now our Authorized Version has rendered this “itself” but the name or title for the Holy Spirit is neuter in Greek, but the Greeks practice grammatical gender. In English, we use natural gender.

Now, the Greeks therefore, may refer to a person as a thing if the name of that person is neuter and gender. But they understood, of course, that it was masculine in fact and occasionally you will find in the case of the Holy Spirit, this manifesting itself because he will be referred to from time to time as He. And so here we should render this the spirit himself, not the spirit itself.

But the spirit, “Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.—and he that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the spirit. Because he maketh intercession for the saints according to God.”

Now, you’ll notice those words, “the will of” are supplied by the translators, and I’m happy with the supplying of them, but I just want you to notice it is according to God. The spirit prays according to God. Here we have the spirit assisting, “The spirit also helpth our infirmity.”

Now, we must understand the context to understand this text. Now, that’s true of course of every biblical passage. If we do not look at the context, we are inclined to misunderstand the text. So we must take a look back at the context of Romans chapter 8 and specifically the immediately preceding context.

Remember in Romans the thing that Paul was interested in, primarily, was giving us a systematic treatment of salvation. He said right in the beginning of this epistle that,

“The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first then also to the Greek. For in it is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith as it stand written the just shall live by faith.”

And so he began by pointing out human sin, then the work of Jesus Christ in salvation, then the work of Jesus Christ and the spirit in sanctification. And in the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter, he has come in verse 17 to the prospects of glorification. He has said that in children and heirs.

“Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. So be that we suffer with them that we may also be glorified together.”

But he knows that glorification may be somewhat distant from us and, therefore, he launches into a little discussion of the suffering that may await believers during this present season. That’s what he discusses in this immediately proceeding context.

He says,

“For I reckon that the sufferings of present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us.”

So before the crown of glorification there may come the cross of suffering. Before the glory there is a period of groaning. It’s rather striking that this passage is divided up by three references to groaning, and I want you to notice them. Verse 22,

“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now.”

Why is the creation groaning? Well, Paul tells us that the creation is groaning for the manifestation of the sons of God, deliverance from this present time of suffering and sin and humiliation. And so the creation itself looks forward to that wonderful day when Jesus Christ shall come, establish a kingdom. The creation shall be delivered from its participation in human sin or its judgment as a result of human sin, when the thorns and thistles are no more. The desert shall blossom like the rose. And so the creation groans and travails together in pain until now, like a pregnant woman who is about to bring forth a child. A creation, of course, will bring forth under the power of God the millennial earth.

In verse 23 he says, “Not only it” it should read,

“Not only it, but ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body.”

That is what should be the normal experience of a Christian to groan in travail and pain, waiting for the resurrection when the redemption of his spirit is completed by the

redemption of our bodies. And we have a glory -- a body liken to our Lord’s own glorious body.

So this period of time, in which we are living, is a period of time in which the creation groans. It is a period of times in which we groan, longing for the day of the wonderful kingdom of Jesus Christ. But not only does the creation groan, not only does the believer groan, but Paul says in verse 26, even the Spirit groans.

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

So the creation groans, the children grown, the comforter groans. Three groaning entities all looking forward to the redemption of the body and the kingdom of our Lord, which shall follow it. In other words, the whole of God’s work longs for the glory of the kingdom of Lord Jesus Christ, released from this life. And the Spirit shares this groaning with us.

Now, when we read in verse 26 then, “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity,” we are to realize that what this means, primarily, is that the Spirit enters into our longing for the kingdom of Jesus Christ, participates in it himself, longs within us for that because, of course, he shall then have more of us, in that day. Now, I think that when we think then of the Spirit assisting us and refer to this text, we are to think of that primarily.

I do think, of course, that this indicates that it is the Spirit’s general work, to help us and we are justified in making application to other aspects of our Christian life. I think that we can count upon the help of the Holy Spirit in anything that we are doing in the will of God, as long that it is in the will of God. And we may count upon Him as being our helper.



So this is a remarkable text. It’s not unusual at all to speak of this however, let’s turn over to 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians chapter 5 for a moment. And you will see again how much of Paul’s thought looks forward to the coming of our Lord in the rapture and the result of deliverance from the present body.

Now, I look out over this audience and I see most of you are young and vigorous and you do not have any sense of need of a new tabernacle in which to dwell. But those of us who are old and our tabernacle has becoming a little shabby and worn out, look forward with a great deal of anticipation to having something better than we have ever had. And Paul did, too. And if I may be so bold as to predict, some of you may feel that way also. Because I remember a generation -- I mean, decades ago, when I felt like you feel now.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians chapter 5,

"For we know that if our earthly house, *this* tabernacle, were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

By the way, that word, “dissolve,” was often used of the dismantling of a tent and I think that is very fitting because the body is liken to a tent.

We have, “For if we know that our earthly house of this tabernacle were dismantled, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan,” There he is again, “for in this we groan.” That is in this tabernacle right here we groan, “earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, if so be being clothed, we shall not be found naked.”

He did not want to pass into the presence of the Lord without this body. He much preferred to participate in the rapture because then there would be no state, no bodiless state for him. That indicates, of course, that if we die before this time, we shall be without a body. Our spirit shall be with the Lord. We shall be in a state of

incompleteness. But when he comes from Heaven and the church has caught up to meet him in the air, then we shall have our bodies, the living shall be changed, the dead shall be raised, that is their bodies raised, transformed into bodies like his bodies. And the spirits of those that are with him shall rejoin their bodies, together with we that are alive and remain and have our bodies changed and so shall the whole church meet the Lord.

But Paul does not want to die and be without a body. He does not want that stage to be that part of his experience. Unfortunately, it is part of his experience because he has died now. But he was expressing his hope. He says in verse 4,

“For we who are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality may be swallowed up of life.”

In other words, there are three states for man from the standpoint of his body. The first state is clothed, to be clothed. The second state is to be unclothed. And the third state is to be clothed upon; that is, to have clothing put on over clothing. And so what Paul means is we are, in the present state, are clothed. My spirit has a body, that’s my clothing, in Paul’s metaphor. If I die, then I’m unclothed, but ultimately I shall be clothed upon like our Lord’s body.

Now, really in Paul’s eye, he would rather be clothed and then clothed upon, with clothing with the body that is living and the Lord come and have it changed. And so he expresses it here and in fact he says he groans for that experience. He was speaking, of course, of the rapture.

So you are clothed. Some of us may be unclothed one day. All of us shall ultimately be clothed upon. And all of us probably would like to be clothed upon without having to pass through death. There are very few people who want to die. And even the apostle did not really want to die. He wanted to go be with the Lord. He said he had a desire to depart and be with Christ but at the same time he wanted to depart

and be with Christ by means of the rapture, if possible. And I understand him thoroughly because I feel much the same way.

This is glorification. Now Bengel, when he comes to glorification in his comments on Romans chapter 8 says, as he stops, he lays down his pen, he stops, he lays down his pen and he prays crying out, “Glorified. O God, what art thou making of us.”

Did you know it is a tremendous thing to realize someday we are going to be glorified? Think of it. Just think of it. There’s Dick Parker, one day he’s going to be glorified. Amazing. Amazing. Astounding. And the joy of it should really fill us, that one day we shall be glorified.

Now, in the meantime, all of these infirmities, which are outgrowths of that one infirmity. We are in the flesh and unable to do what, we in the new man, would desire to do for the Lord. It is the spirit who helps us in our infirmities. And he helps us with groanings that are unutterable. He enters so much into our experience that he grows with us.

Very few Christians would ever -- would ever, I’m sure feel that they did not really want to please the Lord. In fact, if we really claim to be Christians and if it should be true of us that we did not really desire to be -- to please the lord, I would have to think that there is some questions about our Christianity. Most of us that genuinely believed in Jesus Christ, I think all of us, manifest our faith in our desire to please the Lord. You see we are handicapped, we have this old body. And in this old body is the sin principal and it is active and working, and it is constantly as Paul said in Romans chapter 7, “seeking to bring us into captivity,” to the law. Sin and death are our members, and it always succeeds too, Paul says, apart from the supernatural help of the Spirit. And so when we want to glorify the Lord, we find that we are in the grips of the sin principal within us. And the struggle of the Christian life is the struggle of the new life and the old life and the person of the spirit is the secret of the victory.

So I’m looking forward to the day that I do not have to struggle with the old man. I look forward to the day when I can be in the presence of the Lord and shall be able to do what I would like to do, please him and glorify him. In the meantime, the Spirit helps me.

Second, The Spirit Interceding. Now, notice our text back in Romans 8 again. It’s not surprising that the Holy Spirit is called in the Old Testament in Zechariah chapter 12 when Israel is brought to the knowledge of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. You may remember the passage, in which it says,

“They shall look upon him whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for the loss of an only child.”

Now, it’s not surprising that the Holy Spirit is called, at that point, the Spirit of grace and supplications. For remember Zechariah says, giving the prophesy of the Lord,

“I will pour upon them the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they shall look upon them whom they have pierced.”

You see no spiritual activity in really ever accomplished apart from the Holy Spirit. And he not only helps us, but he prays for us. He is the Spirit of grace and supplications. And in the future, all those expressions of mourning conviction and confessing are to be traced to him and to his grace. And so when Israel responds, it is because the spirit of grace has brought them to the place of response and the spirit of supplications has worked in their hearts. The Spirit intercedes.

Now, Paul says in Romans 8,

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

Now Paul is speaking primarily about deliverance from the body, in our context, remember. But I think that we are safe in saying that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us in all of God’s will for us. And have you noticed what he says in verse 27?

“Now He, God, that searcheth the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is*, because He makes intercession for the saints according to God.”

In other words, when the Holy Spirit intercedes, the Father knows what the spirit - what the mind of the Spirit is because the Spirit always intercedes according to God. In other words, every petition the Spirit makes for us is a petition that God is bound to honor because the Spirit, being God, prays according to God. He prays according to the will of God. He never prays anything that shall not be answered. And so as the Spirit intercedes seeking, longing for the deliverance of the saints, that they may experience the glory of God, we have assurance that it shall be accomplished because his prayers are always answered.

So if the Spirit is the author of all of our holy desires, if he is the author of every holy aspiration, if he is the author of every spiritual victory, because it is he who stirs up the prayers and obedience, we have one of the greatest comforts that we could possibly have in the Bible.

Now, Jude speaks in the 20<sup>th</sup> verse of his little book of “praying in the Spirit.” To pray in the Spirit is to pray with the Spirit. For He authors our holy prayers, and they’re answered. So the Spirit helps us in our infirmity. He also intercedes for us, and he intercedes for us according to the will of God. He is sanctifying us. All of this is part of

his ministry of sanctification in which he brings us ultimately to the likeness of Jesus Christ.

You know, we like to say that salvation is the work of God. Sanctification is just as much a work of God. I hope if we learn nothing else, as I’ve said more than once, we learn through our studies in the Holy Spirit that just as Jesus Christ has accomplished our salvation, so it is the Holy Spirit who accomplishes our sanctification. And just as we do nothing but accept what the Son has done for us, so we do nothing but allow the Holy Spirit to accomplish his work within us by faith. We accept his work of sanctification.

And as we accept the work of salvation by faith, by trust, so we accept the work of sanctification by faith by trust. In other words, we allow him to do his work in us. We allow him to save us. Allow him to sanctify us. That’s what the whole -- that’s what the teaching of the Bible is all about. And so often as Christian, you know, we come -- it’s like the light of divine illumination that enables us to see that we are sinners and lost and under condemnation, and so we cast ourselves upon the saving work of Christ that the cross for our salvation. And then sad to say that Christians have to relearn that fact that they still have the old nature within them, and they can never sanctify themselves anymore than they can save themselves.

And they come finally to the place of complete frustration and defeat and then they say, if I’m going to be sanctified, God will have to do it. And then he is able to do it. And the burden of the struggle of the Christian life, becomes the burden of the Holy Spirit.

I’m delighted to know that God is going to accomplish his work in me. And I’m confident of that. Now of course, I may fail him from time to time. I do. I may fail him much in the future, but I know that his work is going to be completed.

Third, the Spirit Leading. Let’s turn to verses 12 through 17 of Romans chapter 8. Paul says,

“Therefore, brethren,” Romans 8:12, “We are debtors—not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die; But if ye through the Spirit, or by the Spirit, do put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are sons of God.”

Look at the text, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

How can you tell a son of God? How can you tell a son of God? Well, one of the ways you can tell a son of God is he's led by the Spirit. Every Christian is led by the Spirit. Every son of God is led by the Spirit. Now, at times, he may not follow, but he is led by the Spirit. That is part of our inheritance as a Christian, the leading, guiding ministry of the Holy Spirit. So when we say, who is led by the Spirit? Why every Christian is led by the Spirit. He urges us, prompts us, stirs us up. That's his ministry.

So he's the guide of the godly. That was true of the Old Testament, and it is true of the new. The need for this ministry is plain in the word of God. Jeremiah says, "It's not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

No man knows the steps that he must take. Only the Holy Spirit knows that, but he does it. Well, how does he guide us? Well, he guides us objectively by the word of God. If, for example, there is a teaching in the word of God that is contrary to a step that I am planning on taking, it is obvious that does not come from the Holy Spirit, because he always guides in accordance to the word of God.

So objectively, he guides by pointing us to the precepts of the word of God. Inwardly, he guides by his secret impulses within the soul, urging us to the right course. And the test to all of our guidance is ultimately the word of God.

Now, if we were faced with a decision that we had to make, and we were looking for an answer, and we want specifically the guidance of the Holy Spirit, what should we

do? Practically. Well, first of all, we should search the word of God to see what the word of God has to say on this point.

Let me illustrate. If, for example, you were a young man and you wanted to preach and teach the word, but if, as you searched your own heart, you came to the conviction that you did not really have a gift of utterance. Would it be the Spirit’s guidance that you engage in the ministry of teaching or pastor teacher or evangelist? No, the word of God makes it plain that the ministry gifts of utterance are to be exercised by those who have spiritual gift, so if your spiritual gift does not lie in that sphere, you are out of the will of God in attempting to do even that good thing.

Now, let me bring it down to something a little more to the point. Let’s suppose that you are a young lady like one of these three on my left down front. And let’s suppose that you’re going with a young man. And let’s suppose that you’re a Christian, and he is not a Christian. And let’s suppose that he proposes. What should you do? Well, the word of God is very plain. Believers should not be yoked together with unbelievers. And if any relationship is a yolk, marriage is a yolk. It’s even called by some, bondage. So it definitely qualifies as a yolk.

Well, then, can you be in the will of God in marrying that young man? No, you cannot be in the will of God in marrying that young man. Or should you not say, “Well, he says he’ll come to church with me after we’re married regularly, and can I hope that he will be converted?” Well you may hope, of course, but the word of God speaks plainly. You should not marry that person. “Well, I know somebody like Dr. Johnson. He was married when he was an unbeliever and his wife was a believer and he was converted.” Yes, that true. That is divine grace. Divine grace. But you cannot do it. The word of God speaks against it.

Well, let’s say you study the Scriptures and you discover that there is no such thing as denominationalism in the Bible. And then as a young man you are given an opportunity assume the pulpit of a denominational church. Shall you do it? No, you



should not do it. If that is something that is taught in Scripture, that the church is one body composed in all who believe and that any kind of division of the body is contrary to the teaching of the word of God. If you have been taught that in the word, then under no circumstances should you disobey what is the teaching of the word of God in that matter. Because, you see, one step of compromise leads to another. And one sin leads to a deeper sin. And you can be sure that if Satan wins one victory, he’ll come to you with a larger struggle the next time. And finally, the time will come when you are unable to resist the powers of Satan. So the answer is, to the questions of guidance, are often settled by the simple consideration of what the Bible teaches.

Perhaps, you are thinking though, “Well, Dr. Johnson, my problem is not things like this, my problem is really, what shall I do when both are acceptable according to the word of God?” Most of our problems do occur in the area, if we know anything about the Bible.

Now, then the Bible says that the Holy Spirit witnesses with our Spirit. We read in verse 16 in Romans chapter 8,

“The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”

In other words, they are those secret promptings of the Holy Spirit that give guidance to us, in cases in which the word of God does not speak directly. Well, how can we be sure? That’s so subjective. Well, fortunately the Bible gives us another test of our actions over in Colossians chapter 3 in verse 15 we read,

“And let the peace of God, or of Christ, rule in your hearts.”

Now, the peace of Christ ruling in your hearts. What does that mean? Well, the word rule, as you may have heard Bible teachers point out, is a word that comes from the Greek word that means an umpire.

Now, we are in the midst of the World Series, the Pittsburgh Pirates and the Baltimore Orioles. And everyday, if you’ve been watching TV -- now I haven’t -- unfortunately, I have not. Since the Yankees are not in the series, I don’t pay a whole lot of attention to them. I’m a great Yankee fan and have been for forty years, and I’m very disappointed in my Yankees over the past five or six years, so I’m losing interest in baseball. But if you look at the TV today, you will notice there is a man behind the plate, behind the catcher, who is calling balls and strikes. And then there are little blind men around each of the bags and they are making decisions on the base players. They’re calling a guy out or they’re saying he’s safe, and they are umpires. Probably at least four of them or five of them in a World Series game, they have a little more. They want to be sure. Now, these men make decisions. They are the umpires. They make the final decisions. Their word is law.

Now, Paul says, let the word of Christ be your umpire -- let the peace of Christ be your umpire. In other words, if I feel that I have two alternative decisions to make and the Holy Spirit in my heart, seem both are in harmony with the word of God and the Holy Spirit seems to be leading me to take one course. And if I take that course, I begin to move in that course and I have a peace of Christ in my heart, then that is his seal of approval upon that step. But if I should take that step and I feel a sense of uneasiness, anxiety, then that’s the indication that that’s not his step and I’d better step back and rethink my decision.

Guidance, you see, is relatively a simple thing because the Spirit promises the guidance. We don’t have to seek his guidance. He promises his guidance. He says, “I will guide thee with my knife.” Our responsibility is simply to respond to the guidance

that he has given. That’s the leading of the Spirit. That’s a wonderful privilege to have the leading of God, the Holy Spirit.

Now, in conclusion, I want to turn this around and ask the question, what is our response to the sanctifying ministry of the Spirit? So I want you to turn over to Galatians now. We could have looked at Romans chapter 8 but I like the passage in Galatians because it’s a little fuller than the one in Romans 8, which also speaks of our walking by the Spirit.

Galatians chapter 5 in verse 16. All right, Galatians 5:16,

“This I say then: Walk in the Spirit.”

Now that may be rendered, a little more accurately by the Spirit. But either rendering suits the purpose. “This I say then: Walk by the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”

In other words, the secret, the victory in the Christian life is to walk by the Spirit. Then if we are walking by the Spirit, we have the promise, ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one to the another, so that ye may not do the things that you would. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”

Paul is trying to show in Galatians, of course, that to be led by the Spirit is a higher standard of life than to be led by the Ten Commandments. I’ve often illustrated this by the simple analogy of a sign that says speed limit sixty miles an hour verses some living policeman in a squad car. And the sign means very little to many people, even Christian, but the men in the squad car mean considerable. And it is much better to have

a personal guide than an impersonal standard. So the Ten Commandments are beautiful expressions of the righteousness of God, and Christians, even in New Testament times, should pay a great deal of attention to the principles that are reflected in the Ten Commandments. It is a codification of the essential nature of God, his righteousness, his justice. But at the same time, the Christian, realizing that he has a personal guide within him is far more likely to do the will of God than simply if he were to have a code like the Ten Commandments. For the personal guide is a more responsible leader.

Now then will you look at verse 22.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”

In other words, the man who allows the Holy Spirit to live life through him will produce the kind of life that if it is examined by the Law of Moses, the law will find no flaw in it. So the man who is producing the fruit of the Spirit is fulfilling the law. Because love is the fulfillment of the law as our Lord taught it. And verse 25 is the verse that I want to spend the remaining few minutes on.

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”

Now, you can see what Paul has been saying is simply this, he has been exhorted the Galatians against Lichens. He has exhorted them to walk by the Spirit, and he has said that the evidence of two types of life when we are led of the flesh is the works of the flesh, when we are led of the Spirit the evidence is the fruit of the Spirit. Which is the full-orb, symmetrical character of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That’s what the Holy Spirit produces in us. Love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness,

meeekness, self-control. All of this is nothing more than a kind of picture that Jesus Christ’s own perfect life.

Now, how do we produce this? Humanly, what is our response? It is the Spirit who produces it, but what is our response if we live by the Spirit?

Now that if is not the if of doubt. It’s the if of assumption. If we life in the Spirit, and we do -- this is first-class condition in Greek so we could render it, even since we live by the Spirit let us also walk by the Spirit. Our life is life by the Spirit and so if we live by the Spirit, then we are to walk by the Spirit.

Now, it’s come to something else. Notice verse 16 says, “Walk by the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” Verse 25 says, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”

Now, twice Paul used this expression, “Walk by the Spirit.” In the Greek text there are two words for walking in this context. One of them is the word *peripateo*. I’ll spell it out. *peripateo*. The other is the word *stoicheo*. This is the first in verse 16. This is the second, in verse 25. Those of you that have got your Greek testaments with you now, you can take a look at it.

The essential difference between these two words is this, the word *peripateo* which is used in verse 16, is a word that means to walk in general. It’s a word that refers to a man’s habit of life. You might say, his walk is very displeasing to the lord. We don’t mean that he has a strange gait when he physically walks down the street. If that would true most of us, would be disqualified. Some of us walk slumped shouldered, some erect, some hang one shoulder down, some do all kinds, some shuffle along and so on. The walk in verse 16 is the general habit of life.

But the word in verse 25 is a unique word and it comes from the Greek word that meant a mark, an element. It was used of the ABC’s, for example. And it also meant a step. So I think verse 25 really should be translated, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also

take each step by the Spirit.” Now that’s interesting. I’ve always wanted to know how to walk by the Spirit, have not you?

Now, the Lord was great in the use of illustrations. He said if you want to know what winning souls was like, it’s like fishing. And so he gave them a kind of giant object lesson. He caught some fish and he said from hence forth, thou shall be fishers of men. You’re not going to catch men, catch fish for death but you are going to catch men for life. That was the word he used, “catch” in the sense of “catch alive.” And so I have a beautiful little picture of what it means to win souls for Christ. I’ve got to have equipment. I got to know something about fishing. I’ve got to know something about where the fish are, and I’ve got to have a guide, an example. And I’ve got to practice the use of my equipment. I can never learn to fish if I buy some beautiful tackle and leave it in the corner. I cannot catch fish if I have some beautiful tackle and do not -- I can not catch fish well, if I have this tackle and take it out to the lake or the river and do it without some instruction.

So I know something about winning souls from that little metaphor. I know something about walking by the Spirit by this expression of Paul. To walk by the Spirit was to take each step by the Spirit. To walk by the Spirit was just like walking naturally. What do you do when you walk naturally? What does a baby do? Now, have you ever seen a baby do this? Have you ever seen a baby sitting in the high chair, about eight months old, suddenly get a strange look on his face, look around at the adults walking back and forth, in the room. Then you see that little baby thinking, togs a turning, you know this walking is not a hard matter. It’s relatively simple. All you have to do is put one foot forward transfer your weight to that, then put another foot forward, transfer your weight to that. Walking is simple. Takes the high tray over its shoulder, slides down and walks in perfect rhythm across the kitchen floor. Have you ever seen that? No. You never have seen that. It’s impossible. It’s often said, if it were my children would have done it. Or a least my grandchild or grandchildren. No, it’s impossible.

What do they do? A baby is a beautiful illustration of learning how to walk because a baby begins to crawl, then it leans on its side. My grandchild was very strange. My latest grandchild, very strange. She leaned on her side most of the time. She almost passed the sitting up stage entirely, and she would lean on her side. And then they pull themselves up on pieces of furniture, and they begin to take little steps around the furniture and sooner or later, they are passing from one piece of furniture to another. Until finally, they make the great experiment and they start and collapse and fall. They hit their heads on pieces of furniture, and you would think they would be killed by the things that happened to them. And ultimately, they begin to take one step, collapse, fall. Two steps, collapse, fall. Three steps, collapse, fall. Soon they are walking across the room but they are still falling, collapsing. They have little marks about their eyes, their nose and their head, bumps on them. This is the process of learning to walk. And you know as long, even when they become children, who can walk, young people who have agility and adults who are mature, they still occasionally fall.

We know how to walk and we walk but we are still liable to fall. And you see that is exactly how a person learns to walk by the Spirit. You’ll never learn to walk by the Spirit if you’re not willing to take a few steps. And so, as the decisions of life face you, day after day, for you do live existentially in the present and decisions face you from morning until evening. Until you come to the place where you say, “Well, I’m not going to do what I want to do. I’m going to let the Holy Spirit guide me and I’m going to listen, read the word of God, and then I’m going to listen to that inner impulse for his guidance and I’m going to begin to take a step. You may fall, you may fall on your first one, but sooner or later you’ll begin to take a few steps, and God will bless those steps, and you will realize that you have been guided by the Holy Spirit. And then as you continue, you will learn more and more about the guidance of the Spirit. Until finally, you will become an adult, spiritually, and you will learn how to be -- not how to be led for the leading is always there but how to follow the leading of the Spirit, how to walk by

the Spirit. It may take you a long period of time. Why not? It took you as a child a long time to learn to walk. But that is the believer’s response to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is walking by the Spirit.

Now, it’s illustrated in the Old Testament in the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. Israel was told, when they went through the wilderness, that they would be guided in the daytime by a pillar of cloud and at night by a pillar of fire. And they were told if the cloud moves, you move. If the cloud stays, you stay. And whether it be a day or a month or a year, if it stays, you stay. In other words, Israel was to have no plans of their own. They were to be guided by the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. No plans of their own. Everyday they looked up for the guidance that came from above. Every night they looked up for the guidance that came from above. If the cloud moved, they moved. If the cloud did not move, they were to stay.

Now we have no plans of our own. We are not to have any plans of our own. We don’t know what the future holds for us. To move without the cloud? Let’s just think of Israel at night. The cloud of fire in the light above. To move if the cloud stayed but to move in the darkness. That is what happened when a Christian moves when the Spirit has not led. It moves in the darkness.

Now, if the cloud moved and Israel stayed, it was to move into darkness also. And so if the Holy Spirit has been guiding and you do not follow, then it is to move into darkness

Now, people often say, “Now that was Israel. I think that I could have been guided very well, if I had that kind of guider-visible guide. My goodness, all you have to do is look up and there it is, if he moved then you moved. It’s simple. If I just had a visible guide like that.”

Now, that’s sad because actually the church is no worse off than Israel. Which would you rather have a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire or the person of the Holy Spirit as your guide? Personally, indwelling you, guiding you. Now you can have all the clouds



you want and all of the pillar of fire. I’ll take the Holy Spirit, personally. We are no worse off than Israel. We have the Holy Spirit, himself, who is able and willing and constantly is guiding us. And if we do not listen to his voice, we would not pay any attention to that cloud above, just as Israel sinned so often.

Life by the Spirit then involves the response of walking by the Spirit who among his many ministries of sanctification, leads and guides us.

I wish I had time to tell you some of my own little experiences, but you’ve probably had some yourself. If not, why don’t you the next opportunity make a decision comes to you the necessity for the decision, turn it over to the Holy Spirit. Let him make the decision and then learn to walk and follow him.

We will not have a class next Tuesday night. We are -- with this, I am concluding the studies in the Holy Spirit and I would like to have a little time to think about what we shall do in our systematic theology, in the future.

Let’s close with a word of prayer and we will have questions tonight for those of you that would like to ask them.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the teaching of the word of God and especially again, we want to give Thee praise, gratitude, and thanksgiving for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We thank Thee that he intercedes, that he helps, that he teaches, that he leads. And we pray, Lord, that by his enabling grace, we may follow.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.