

What does it mean to live under the control of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:16; Eph 5:18)?

(Adapted in part from, *He that is Spiritual*, by L. S. Chafer)

By Jay Wegter

Introduction: It has been said, “Exhortation without enablement equals exasperation.” How blessed we are as believers in Christ to have His Spirit living in us to *empower* the Christian life. The Holy Spirit is our helper, our comforter (Jn 14:16), our pledge, or ‘down payment’ of the glory to come (Eph 1:13-14). He illumines the Word for us (1 Cor 2:10-16), and He floods our hearts with the love of Christ (Rom 5:5).

If we are to walk in a way that is pleasing to God, we must know our manifold resources and promises we have in the Holy Spirit. And, we must know the responsibilities we bear toward the Spirit, for He is the ‘Spirit of adoption’ (Rom 8:14-16; Gal 4:6)—He brings into our experience the reality of our sonship, our relation to our Triune God. He is a Person who deserves our utmost reverence, loyalty, gratitude, love and obedience.

I. The Holy Spirit’s work is expressed in eight ministries.

A. The Spirit has TWO ministries in relation to the world.

- 1) **He restrains (2 Thess 2:6).** “And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way” (2 Thess 2:6).
- 2) **He reproveth (convicts, rebukes) the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn 16:8-11).** “And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged” (Jn 16:8-11).

B. The Spirit has SIX ministries in relation to the believer.

- 1) **He regenerates (He produces the new birth) (Titus 3:4-7).** “But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:4-7). He calls, quickens, and applies the redemptive work of Christ to the believing sinner.
- 2) **He baptizes the believing sinner into the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-13).** “For even as the body is one and *yet* has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit

we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor 12:12-13).

- 3) **He sanctifies believers, setting them apart unto God and unto holiness (2 Thess 2:13).** **The sanctifying work of the Spirit enables believers to live holy lives.** “. . .who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure” (1 Pet 1:1b-2).
“But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth” (2 Thess 2:13).

Just as the holy things in the tabernacle and temple were devoted to the Lord in the OT, NT believers are ‘set apart’, sanctified, devoted to the Lord for daily holy use.

- 4) **He seals the believing sinner for the day of redemption (Eph 1:13-14; 4:30; 2 Cor 5:5).** “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God’s own* possession, to the praise of His glory” (Eph 1:13-14).
- 5) **He indwells the believer (Rom 8:9-11; 1 Cor 6:19).** “However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (Rom 8:9-11).
- 6) **He fills (controls) the believer (Eph 5:18).** “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ” (Eph 5:18-21).

The Spirit’s filling is not primarily to energize our private piety. He enables and directs our joyful obedience to the *people to people* commands. He empowers our ability to nurture one another in discipleship. Thus, He empowers the social bonds in the Body of Christ so that through the corporate life of the Body, mutual edification takes place. When we step out in obedience in building up our brethren, the Holy Spirit is there enabling and directing the edification.

II. **The Holy Spirit’s work is expressed in eight manifestations in the life or walk of the Christian.**

A. The TWO manifestations of Christian service and intercession in prayer.

- 1) The Spirit produces Christian service in the Spirit-filled believer. The Spirit gives each believe a spiritual gift or “manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor 12:6-7).** “There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor 12:6-7).

In our context of the Spirit’s work, the term ‘*manifestation*’ comes from 1 Corinthians 12:6-7 wherein the Spirit’s indwelling presence in the believer is *manifested* by the believer exercising his spiritual gift for the common good.

- 2) The Spirit intercedes for the believer in prayer (Rom 8:26-27).** “In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*” (Rom 8:26-27).

We are to ‘pray in the Spirit’ (Eph 6:18), that is with awareness of depending upon the Spirit. He helps our weakness and infirmity, for, we so often do not know how to pray as we should (Rom 8:26-27).

B. The TWO manifestations of Christian character and worship.

- 1) The Spirit produces Christian character (spiritual fruit) in the Spirit-filled believer (Gal 5:22-24).** “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal 5:22-24).

One of the marks of having the indwelling Spirit is a strong desire to identify with other believers and in so doing, participate in their spiritual growth. These Spirit-enabled ‘relational graces’ are described in verses such as: Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 4:1, 25; Colossians 3:12-17ff.

- 2) The Spirit promotes praise and thanksgiving (Eph 5:18-20).** “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father” (Eph 5:18-20).

C. The TWO manifestations of leading and assurance.

- 1) The Spirit leads the believer as he exercises faith, love, and obedience (Rom 8:14; Gal 5:18).** “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Rom 8:14). “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law” (Gal 5:18).

- 2) **The Spirit grants assurance to true believers—He bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God (Rom 8:16-17).** “The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*” (Rom 8:16-17).

D. The TWO manifestations of understanding and doing Scripture.

- 1) **The Spirit teaches us, granting understanding of the Word of God (1 Cor 2:12-13).** “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*” (1 Cor 12:12-13). The Spirit’s teaching ‘illuminates’ our comprehension of Scripture and of Christ Himself (Jn 16:13-15).

“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose *it* to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore, I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose *it* to you” (Jn 16:13-15).

- 2) **He empowers our obedience in our witness, ministry, and faithfulness (Acts 1:8; Jn 16:26-27).** “. . .but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is* the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, and you *will* testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning” (Jn 15:26-27).

The ability and desire to obey our Lord’s commands is a function of the Spirit’s constant enablement. He energizes both our actions in initiating ministry, and in overcoming temptation (Rom 8:10-13; 1 Cor 10:13). It is our responsibility to respond to Him in yielded-ness and joyful hearty obedience.

III. The Holy Spirit’s control requires that the saint be rightly ‘adjusted’ to Him. There are THREE commands governing this relationship with the Spirit.

A. ONE: Do not grieve the Spirit (Eph 4:30).

- 1) **To ‘grieve’ the Spirit is to live with known sin in one’s life (Eph 5:3-5).**

“But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and *there must be no* filthiness and silly talk, or coarse

jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God” (Eph 5:3-5).

To grieve the Spirit is to tolerate sin; to seek to co-exist with it instead of repenting of it, confessing it and forsaking it, and no longer making a provision for it (Rom 13:14).

- 2) **The believer is to daily/hourly practice self-examination, or ‘self-judgment’ in order to mortify sin—confessing the sin and forsaking it (1 Cor 11:31-32).** “But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world” (1 Cor 11:31-32).
- 3) **The Father is faithful to chastise (discipline) His children who are lax concerning ongoing repentance from sin (Heb 12:7-9).** “It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live” (Heb 12:7-9).
- 4) **The believer is to continually mortify sin (put sin to death) in order to avoid grieving the Spirit (Col 3:5-8).** “Therefore, consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth” (Col 3:5-8).
- 5) **God promises that He forgives sin and restores fellowship when the believer confesses his sin (1 Jn 1:9).** “. . .but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn 1:7-9).

Many professing Christians show little interest in discipling, or being disciplined BECAUSE they are living with a grieved Spirit. The Christian must be rightly adjusted to the Spirit if he or she is to be joyfully available to nurture others in their Christian walk. We are commanded to not be sluggish; but be diligent in our walk and service (Heb 6:11-12).

B. TWO: do not quench the Spirit (1Thess 5:19).

- 1) **To ‘quench’ the Spirit is to resist His leading into obedience. The Spirit continually calls for the believer to offer his life to God as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1-2).** “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual

service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom 12:1-2).

- 2) **God requires reverent submission to the Spirit, since He is constantly at work in us—leading us to do the will of Father (Phil 2:12-13).** “So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure” (Phil 2:12-13).
- 3) **The Spirit desires to animate, control, and empower the Christian life—He is righteously jealous of any idolatrous thing we would allow to control us in place of Him (Jas 4:5).** “Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us” (Jas 3:5).
- 4) **“Quench not the Spirit,” for He leads us to confess any sin which interrupts our communing with the Lord. As such, the Spirit causes us to have *prayer effectual, joy celestial, and fruit perpetual* because these graces are by-products of abiding in Christ.** “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:3-5).

Many believers are procrastinating in a particular area of obedience—this reluctance involves *quenching the Spirit*. For some, it might be an unwillingness to forgive another person. For another it might be a hesitancy to confess a sin committed against them. For someone else it might be a fearful unwillingness to serve the Lord in a particular area. The Spirit is patient, but if we are to please the Lord, honor Him and enjoy His blessing, we must not *quench the Spirit*.

C. THREE: walk in (by means of) the Spirit (Gal 5:16).

- 1) **To walk by means of the Spirit is to walk in step with the Spirit—walk to His ‘cadence’ (Gal 5:16-18).** “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law” (Gal 5:16-18).
- 2) **To walk by the Spirit is to walk in reliance upon the Spirit—depending upon His enablement in our battle with sin and temptation.** “So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Rom 8:12-13).
- 3) **To walk by means of the Spirit in reliance upon His enablement is expressed in obedience to these commands: “*pray without ceasing,*” “*abide in Him,*”**

“mortify sin,” “rejoice always,” “in everything give thanks,” “take up the full armor of God,” “do all to the glory of God,” etc.

CONCLUSION: True spirituality begins with a Spirit-enabled understanding of the Word of God. By that Spirit-enabled comprehension of Scripture the believer’s path of faith, love and obedience is marked out. Thus, “he that is spiritual” discerns the will of God from Scripture so that he might walk in it. In so doing, he exercises the “mind of Christ” in his thinking and behavior (1 Cor 2:16).

True spirituality is a function of being ‘rightly adjusted to the Spirit’, for the Spirit of God meets all of our efforts at obedience with His strength, and in so doing produces the Christian life. This gives us a paradigm for viewing God’s commands, for the power necessary to obey the imperatives of Scripture is supplied by the Holy Spirit. Believers do not have to plead with the Spirit to control them. The indwelling Spirit of God manifests Christ-likeness through the believer when he is ‘rightly adjusted’ to the Spirit.

As we think about true spirituality in this manner, it helps us understand that obedience to God’s commands is *normative* for the believer who is rightly adjusted to the Holy Spirit. For that believer is *not grieving the Spirit*, he is *not quenching the Spirit*, and he is *walking by the Spirit*. Therefore, he enjoys the Spirit’s enabling power in his Christian walk.

These truths are essential to effective disciple-making. For, in order for us to take the proper initiative in edifying our brethren, we must know that the Spirit of God is ready to meet our efforts with His sufficiency and strength (Col 1:28-29). If believers relied more upon the Spirit, instead of their own meager resources, they would be less self-protective and tentative. And, their relations in the Body would be far more characterized by encouraging, exhorting, admonishing, serving, and building up their brethren.

Your disciples need to know the boundless resources they possess through the Spirit of God. Praise God, when we extend ourselves beyond our comfort zones in an effort to edify our brethren, the Holy Spirit is there to meet us with His almighty sufficiency.