

The Ministries of the Holy Spirit, Part 3

Scripture: Galatians 3:1–5

Code: 90-33

Let's open our Bibles this morning. We are still discussing "The Sufficiency of the Spirit," which in fact is an interlude in the middle of our study of Philippians. We have finished Philippians 2; we have not embarked on Philippians 3 yet. But the Spirit of God has pressed upon my heart the need to discuss the subject of the sufficiency of the Spirit. It rises out of an assessment that I believe is Spirit-led, that the church today in general — I don't mean this particular local church alone — but the church in general has for all intents and purposes come to a place where it ignores the work of the Holy Spirit. And in the last several messages I have tried to direct your attention to this very fact that the church has lost sight of what it means to live on the spiritual dimension, or the spiritual plane. We have lost touch with the power available in the Holy Spirit.

In thinking about that it has come to my attention that Galatians chapter 3 chronicles for us a very similar situation. The apostle Paul in that passage, chapter 3 of Galatians and verse 1, says, "You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you, did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain, if indeed it was in vain? Does He then who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you do it by the works of the law or by hearing with faith?"

Now the heart of the passage, we have noted, is in verse 3. "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit are you now being perfected by the flesh?" He says you foolish Galatians, who bewitched you? You saw Jesus Christ portrayed as crucified. You understood the cross. You know that you received the Spirit by hearing with faith, not by the works of the law. You know that God provides you the Spirit and that divinely works miracles among you, that too by faith and not by works. So if all of you have begun in the power of the Spirit, why are you now operating in the power of the flesh? That's the question. Why have you, who have experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in your salvation, dropped to live your Christian life on the level of the flesh? That's the issue.

And we have been endeavoring for the last three weeks, this week number four and then next week we'll wrap it up, number five, to call your attention to the fact that it is time to return to the Spirit's power in the church. The church has unwittingly and ignorantly been bewitched. The church has allowed itself to fall prey to pragmatism, to charismaticism and to psychology. The combination of those things has replaced the Holy Spirit. We don't think about the Holy Spirit from a pragmatic viewpoint because we've got all the answers. Who needs the Holy Spirit? We can figure out a way to solve every problem. We don't need the Holy Spirit from a psychological standpoint because we have all of the systems of psychotherapy by which we have devised means to solve our problems. And the Holy Spirit is thus pushed out of the picture.

And then the charismatics have also made us walk very softly regarding the Holy Spirit. We don't say much if we say anything about the Holy Spirit for fear that we might offend them. That was

pointed up to me again this past week when we received a letter from one of the networks that broadcasts Grace to You. And on that particular network we ran a series on 1 Corinthians chapter 14 which dealt explicitly with the ministry of the Holy Spirit and with relationship to tongues. And they wrote us back and said, "Please, these are inappropriate things to be talking about. We want to make peace." And our response to that is, "Peace is not the issue, truth is the issue." But it simply points out to us again what we see so often over and over is that for one reason or another the Holy Spirit is not to be discussed. Either to speak truly about the Holy Spirit offends people who believe differently about Him. Or to speak about the Holy Spirit is frankly archaic and sort of recognizes the fact that you're not very sophisticated and haven't come to a psychological understanding that people's problems are solved a different way. Or discussion about the Holy Spirit means that you're sort of esoteric, mystical, living on some kind of high-level, spiritual plane that is unrelated to reality and you need to get a lot more practical than to function on the Holy Spirit's level.

But all of these things, and in combination, have caused the church to for all intents and purposes forget the work of the Holy Spirit. And they have been pressing the issue of trying to finish and perfect what only the Holy Spirit could finish and perfect as He begun it in the first place. The church, I believe, as a result of this emphasis is carnal, it is fleshly, it lacks spirituality, it is weak and frankly it's hard to talk to the church. Remember when Paul wrote the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 3, he said, "I can't speak to you as spiritual, I have to speak to you as carnal because you are carnal," and it's very much the case in the church. If you come along and try to give a spiritual message to a carnal church, they don't receive it very well.

So the Holy Spirit has been replaced by other things. The result is quite tragically the weakness of the church. So what we've been saying is simply a call back to living in the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, being filled with the Spirit, praying in the Spirit, living on a spiritual plane.

Now remember what we have said and I'll give you a very rapid review. Don't tune out now or you may tune back in when I'm done. It's going to go fast. The Holy Spirit was the source of your salvation, really, or the means of it. The Holy Spirit convicted us of sin. The Holy Spirit brought us to repentance. The Holy Spirit energized faith in us in response to the gospel so we could believe. The Holy Spirit then drew us to submission to Christ. It is by the Spirit that we said, "Jesus is Lord," 1 Corinthians 12:3. And then the Holy Spirit regenerated us. We were born again of the Spirit. Then the Holy Spirit indwelt us, was the means by which we were baptized into the body of Christ, gifted us for spiritual ministry, secured us forever and separated us from sin. All of that happened at the moment of salvation. The Spirit of God did it all. He convicted us, drew us to repentance, energized our faith, brought us to submission to Christ's lordship, regenerated us, indwelt, baptized, gifted, secured and separated us from sin. We began in the Spirit.

And salvation is a supernatural work that ushers you into life on a different level. You've been translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. You have been lifted out of the earthlies into the heavenlies. You function on a different dimension. You function in a different environment, atmosphere. That is the spiritual plane. And you cannot live on the spiritual plane in the flesh. It does not work.

So the Spirit of God then who began the work must also continue to perfect the work on the spiritual level. And so we have been reminding ourselves of what the Holy Spirit does to perfect us. We know what He did in the beginning, what does He continue to do? And I have given you a number of things. Let me remind you of them briefly.

First of all, the Holy Spirit brings us into intimacy with God. He causes us to cry, "Abba Father," daddy, papa. He brings us into intimate communion with the living God of the universe for the sake of fellowship and the sake of resources so that all of our needs can be met in that access, in that intimacy.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit illuminates the Scripture. He makes the Scripture live to us. He makes it vivid to us. He makes it understandable to us. He makes it applicable to us. He illuminates it so that we do not need human wisdom. We can use the wisdom of God taught to us by the Spirit of God.

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ to us. He lifts up Christ. He lifts up Christ as the authority to which we submit and as the example which we follow.

Fourthly, He personally guides us into God's will. He personally guides us into God's will. There is, I believe, a subjective leading of the Holy Spirit by which in the heart He directs us to certain behavior, certain conduct, certain circumstances, certain responsibilities, certain opportunities which reflect the will of God. He moves us by conscience. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God."

So what does the Spirit provide? Prayer, through which we have immediate, instant, intimate access with God who supplies all our needs. He provides revelation for us as we have not only the Scripture but the resident truth Teacher in us who explains the Scripture to us. He provides a model of authority and a model for our own lives in the glorious Christ and He gives to us personal, intimate, daily direction in terms of God's will.

Now I could stop at this point, frankly, end the series by asking the question: Is there anything in life that can't be faced with resources like that? What else would you ever need than total access to God with all His resources, understanding of the Word of God and how you are to conduct yourself, the fullness of the model of Christ, which is to be the pattern by which you live and the authority to which you submit? And you add to that that marvelous reality that day by day, moment by moment the Spirit of God is directing your life and you have a consummate sense that the Spirit of God has done it all.

But in spite of that, there's even more. And this morning I want to give you three final points.

Number five, this is the one you've been waiting for, some of you have been writing me little notes about this one. The Holy Spirit ministers to us through other believers. The Holy Spirit ministers to us through other believers. Several of you have said to me, "John, the way you're talking it almost sounds like a Christian on his own and all alone is sufficient." May I hasten to add, that's correct. I have to believe that. If the Holy Spirit dwells in me and the Holy Spirit is sufficient then I'm sufficient, at least potentially sufficient, right? But the problem is I need some remediation. Even though the sufficiency is there by potential it's not there in reality and one of the things that God uses to stimulate my use of the spiritual sufficiency that is mine is the ministry that comes to me through other believers. The Spirit of God ministers to us through other believers.

Now there are a number of ways in which this occurs, and I don't want to beg the point and I...and we have taught on these various matters a number of times. I just want you to carefully listen to

what I say, give you some general ideas, and then we'll talk about a few of the specific ways in which the Spirit of God ministers.

The Bible is very clear that it is essential for believers to associate together. Let me have you look at Hebrews chapter 10 and we'll make this a starting point for this very basic truth. In verse 23 the writer of Hebrews is concerned about continuity. He's concerned about people who are consistent, or to put it in a simple word, "faithful." He wants faithful people who hold fast their confession, people who don't waver in their spiritual life. Now how is this going to be effected? Well please notice verse 24, "And let us consider (or let us think carefully) about how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds." And we need to think about that, says the writer. How are we going to stimulate one another to love and good deeds? Well a key thing comes in verse 25 obviously, "Not forsaking our own assembling together." I mean, if we aren't together it's for sure we can't stimulate each other at all.

So it's a fairly obvious assumption that we are to get together. It's a secondary thought that we are to get together for the explicit purpose of stimulating one another for love and good works. Now I just want to point out the fact that you're here at church today and the primary reason that you're here is to worship the Lord, but as long as you're here there is a corollary to that and that is that you are to be engaged in a stimulating ministry. Now frankly you may not feel very stimulating today but that is the ministry to which God has called you to stimulate others to love and good works. That's a stimulating ministry. You are to have that effect on other people, to bring about love in their life, to bring about righteousness in their life; very, very basic.

Now let me just take it a step further. That's where we see the sort of basic thing here in Hebrews chapter 10. But I want to take you back to Romans if I might for just a moment, chapter 12. And let me begin at least to help you get in touch with how this stimulation is done. You already know that you don't want to do it in the flesh so you can't use fleshly techniques to stimulate people spiritually. So how then do we help each other? How do we stimulate each other? Obviously even though we all have the Holy Spirit and access to God, we have the Holy Spirit and an understanding of Scripture, we have the Holy Spirit and all the glory of Christ can be revealed to us as the model and authority, we have the Holy Spirit and thus we're led by the Spirit, in spite of all of that we need this mutual stimulation that the church brings to bear. We need that level of accountability that righteous relationships can produce. But within the framework of those relationships, what's going on?

Well let's look at Romans chapter 12 and verse 4. It says there, and this is an analogy, "Just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members one of another." Simple analogy. You have a body, I have a body. It's understandable. We have a body with a lot of members and none of the members do the same thing. My ears do one thing, my nose does one thing, my feet do another thing, my heart does another thing, my lungs do another thing; everything has a place. My muscles are all different in every situation because they have a different function. That's the way the body is. That's also the way the church is. We are one body in Christ and individually members one of another. Everybody has a function to serve one another, everybody. We don't come here to sit and listen, we don't even come here to sit and worship. We come here yes to worship, yes to listen, but in order to be stronger and more effective in being stimulators to the others around us. We have been given different gifts, verse 6 says. Some of us have gifts regarding prophecy or speaking forth such as I do. Some have gifts of service. Some have gifts of teaching, verse 7. Some have gifts of exhortation, or giving, or leading, or showing mercy, as verse 8 indicates. And these are just

differing categories of spiritual giftedness.

Look with me for a moment to 1 Corinthians chapter 12 where the apostle Paul speaks regarding the very same issue of spiritual gifts. And we've spent months and months literally studying through this section, 12 to 14. If you're unclear you can get the tapes or study book on this. But I want you to notice verse 3. Verse 3 twice mentions the Holy Spirit, twice, the Spirit of God and the Holy Spirit. And then verse 4 says, "There are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit." So the Holy Spirit has dealt out varieties of gifts to the varying believers. Verse 7 sums up their purpose, "To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." And then all the way down he says, "They may be differing gifts but the same Spirit," another gift but the same Spirit, another gift but the same Spirit. Finally verse 11, "One and the same Spirit works all these things." Did you hear that?

When I minister my spiritual gift to you, who is working that gift? The Holy Spirit. That's why my son Mark said to me one time, "Dad, when you preach you're really something special but at home you're nothing special at all." And he was dead serious. And I took it as a compliment because that's the way he intended it. He recognized that something happens to me when I begin to minister in the power of a Spirit-given gift. And that's the effectiveness of that.

So it is the Spirit who produces the ministry for the common good. So the Holy Spirit ministers to us through other believers. There are many other believers who minister to me. They minister to me the gifts of service, the gifts of leadership, the gifts of mercy, the gifts of faith which is tied, I believe, to prayer, the gift of giving, and all of these various things. But it is all the Spirit's ministry. Now let me give it to you very simply. A spiritual gift is nothing more than a channel through which the Holy Spirit ministers to the body. That's all. Verse 7 sums it up. It is a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good to build the body. So when I come to worship on the Lord's Day I come not only to exercise my gift for the purpose of stimulating you to love and good works, I come not only to worship God, which is the priority, but I come also to allow the Spirit of God to minister to me through fellowship.

One of the... One of the very great riches of being in a full-time ministry such as I am and spending every day of your life with God's people and God's choice servants is the unending, unceasing constant stimulation. It goes on all day long. Any of the men can attest to that, right Chris? I mean, it goes on all day long. It's either somebody coming in and saying, "John, I need to speak to you about an issue that concerns me greatly that you need to know about and you need to handle this properly," and the Spirit of God through them is ministering to me and I sense that and I need to know that. That's a marvelous kind of stimulation. To live in that sort of constant stimulation is a very, very great gift from God. And I think God gives it to those who have in some ways the greatest spiritual responsibility because they need the greatest amount of stimulation. That is a great richness.

So it is the Spirit of God then, now mark this, who comes to you and me through the gifts of believers. And as they minister to us it is the Spirit of God doing that ministry. Now I just want to say this as a footnote to that. Do you hear it that way? I mean, do you literally tune in to that kind of reality? Or do you sort of take everything as a sort of a superficial situation? Or are you listening for the voice of the Spirit in the stimulating ministry that others might have for you? When somebody comes alongside and encourages you about your own life and your unfaithfulness in a certain area, might even be a husband or a wife, when somebody comes along and encourages you about the need to study the Word of God more faithfully, when somebody encourages you about praying, when

somebody encourages you about being with God's people, when somebody encourages you to get involved in a ministry, hands on, first person, serving Christ with all your heart, do you just sort of push that aside as somebody's opinion or are you listening to the Spirit of God coming to you through the exhortation of that believer? That's a stimulator. And that's how the Spirit of God is ministering to you.

By the way, the conduit by which that ministry comes is love. The conduit by which that ministry comes is love. In Romans 5:5, a familiar text, Paul says, "The love of God has been poured out within our hearts — listen to this — through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." When God gave us the Spirit, He gave us love. And so as I minister to you through the Spirit, the conduit by which the Spirit-ministered gift comes is love. In Romans chapter 15 and verse 30, "I urge you, brethren, by the Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit," and again the Spirit and love are connected. Second Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 6 mentions genuine love in association with the Holy Spirit. Colossians 1:8, "Of your love in the Spirit," and again you see love is associated with the Holy Spirit and love is the conduit through which a Spirit-ministered gift flows. That is why Paul says you are to speak the truth in what? In love.

Now let me give you an illustration of ministry that even goes beyond spiritual gifts. The ministry of the Spirit also comes to us in the "one anothers" of the New Testament. Any time somebody reads through the New Testament and catalogs the "one anothers," he's getting in touch with the basic spiritual responsibilities we have toward each other to stimulate. Love one another, pray for one another, edify one another, comfort one another, exhort one another, rebuke one another, reprove one another, teach one another; all of those are responsibilities of stimulation that are energized by the Holy Spirit.

But let's look at one of them as an illustration since we can't take the time to look at many. Galatians chapter 6, Galatians chapter 6. Now we come across a situation here where a Christian is caught in a trespass. He's fallen into some kind of sin. Would you please notice the first word in verse 1 "brethren," brethren. I cannot stress this strongly enough. Paul does not say, here is a guy who is caught, this guy is trapped, this guy's in bondage. Today we would say he has an addiction. He has a trespass addiction. He's caught in it. Paul does not say, "Look, you need to find a local Greek philosopher who can help him," doesn't say that. He says, "Brethren," and he keeps it in the confines of the church, "even if a man is caught in a trespass addiction, you who are spiritual." Did you get that phrase? Ought to underline that. That's the bottom line. "You who are spiritual restore such a one." Whose responsibility is the restoration of a person with an addiction? The church. "Brethren, you who are spiritual, restore such a one and you do it in a spirit of gentleness and you look to yourself lest you also be tempted, you are to bear one another's burdens and thus you will fulfill the law of Christ." And what is the law of Christ? It's the law, the royal law, the law of love. Takes you right back to John 13:34 and 35.

Now let me show you what I'm saying here. Listen carefully. The Bible doesn't teach anything whatsoever about any professional help for Christians in trouble. All it talks about is Spirit-filled believers, brethren in a local assembly who are spiritual who minister together on behalf of that person. I think part of the reason that people have gone outside the church is because the church has failed to take the responsibility. But I believe with all my heart, now listen carefully to what I'm saying, I believe that the Spirit of God ministers to His church through believers. Brethren, you who are spiritual; you're already on that plane, you're already living in that dimension, you're walking in the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, controlled by the Spirit, praying in the Spirit, you stoop down and begin

the gentle process of restoration. You bear one another's burdens and you will fulfill the law of Christ which is that we are to love one another. That's the issue; "he that is spiritual."

You see, when people fall into traps of sin, either despair, discouragement, depression, fornication, adultery, pornography, you name it, the healing community is the church. And the brethren who are spiritual have the responsibility to deal with people. That's the only way the Bible knows to deal with those kinds of issues.

Now let me sum it up. True biblical counseling, if we want to use that word, true biblical ministry to Christians in need is the process by which a Christian controlled by the Holy Spirit using prayer and the Word leads another believer to spirituality. That's what it is, nothing more. And there is no fleshly, pragmatic human, psychological way to do that. That's a spiritual ministry. And I believe it is a ministry of the congregation. I don't believe it's a ministry of one individual. I think that's the genius of the church.

One writer drew an interesting analogy that will get the point across. He said, "Do not let discouragement drench your spirit or fear flood your soul." A lot of people in discouragement, a lot of people in fear. We could add to that, don't let sin make you its captive, don't let sin hold you in bondage.

"Despite the howling winds of circumstance," he writes, "and the undercurrents of the enemy and the power of sin, press on in the power of the Holy Spirit as you hold firmly to the rudder of faith." Well that's nice, a good injunction, hang on and, you know, try to get through it with all the problems and all the sin. But then he says this, "In the process of holding firmly to the rudder of faith in the midst of this storm, scan the horizon for a fleet of like-minded ships." I like that. Don't do it alone, that's the point, don't do it alone. Scan the horizon for a fleet of like-minded ships, "vessels who adore and serve their King, the Lord Jesus. Once you find them, forsake your isolated wanderings for their protection, fellowship, and instruction."

And then he says this, "The old ships will teach you reverence. Battered ships will be a practicum in compassion. Fast, clipper ships leading the fleet will instill vision, motivation, hope and obedience. Slow barges will instruct you in patience and kindness for they often bear the heaviest burdens. Front-line battleships will evoke respect and humility and teach you how to fight spiritual warfare. And even a broken boat will enlarge your heart for meeting needs." And then he says, "By the way, an occasional collision with another freighter will alert each member to stay on course and faithfully deal with each other in love." And then he sums it up by saying this, "No one ship can counsel all these heaven-sent lessons."

Do you understand the point? Find a fleet of like-minded ships and you will learn from them all. From the older ones you'll learn reverence. From the beaten and battered and bruised you'll learn compassion. From the fast, dynamic moving, visionaries you'll learn that. From the slow, patient, kind barges that have always carried the greatest weight you will learn how to bear the heaviest burdens. From the front-line battleships that take your respect in and your humility when you see yourself compared to them you will learn how to fight the spiritual battle. And the collisions ought to teach you how to deal with people in love and stay on course. And no one craft can teach all of those things.

Dear friends, may I suggest to you that nothing in the Bible ever indicates that you are to go and fix yourself on one person who can be all those ships to you? Can't happen. That's the genius of the church. And if the church ever gets down to being what it ought to be and to sharing its life at those levels of reality, it will be amazing how all of us together can be stimulated to the spiritual plane. But for many of us we believe we have all that we need to meet our own needs our own way. And if we don't, we run to the world to try to get a solution when there isn't any there to begin with.

So the Spirit then ministers to us through other believers. That's a work of the Holy Spirit. Don't cut yourself off from that. Some of you can come and go and hardly have any kind of ministry by the Spirit through another believer. Some of you may get with other Christians but the talk is very shallow, the subject is very earthy and there's no real spiritual stimulation. Don't cheat yourself. That's the Holy Spirit coming to you through that believer.

Now you say, "Well, John, you know I really would like to be able to do this. I would like to be able to, you know, trust the Holy Spirit for access to God. I'd like to be able to know the Word of God by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, follow my model. Christ, and my authority. I'd like to know the guiding working of the Spirit. I'd like to be in the flow of the church so that I'm really living on a spiritual plane, being stimulated to love and good works by other believers, but I feel so weak." And I'm sure some of you are saying that. "It seems like a long way away from reality for me. How...how can I know that I have the strength to do that?" I'm going to give you number six principle here. And this goes with it. The Holy Spirit... You know, did you ever get something without a battery? Isn't it maddening? Somebody gives you something and it doesn't have a battery. And you open it up and you can't make it work. Well the Holy Spirit didn't give you all this stuff with no battery. There's energy and here it is, point number six, the Holy Spirit strengthens us for all of this. The Holy Spirit strengthens us for all of this. He is all about energizing the reality of all of this from potential to fact.

You see, it is basic to the Christian life. I mean, it's absolutely basic that the power for spiritual living in all dimensions comes from the indwelling Holy Spirit. It does, that's just the way it is. The key to victorious, triumphant, joyful, productive living is the power of the Holy Spirit moving in the inner man of the Christian.

Let me just show you this by having you turn to Ephesians, that's the next book from Galatians, chapter 3 and verse 14. Here Paul is praying a prayer. And his prayer is pretty direct. He says, "I bow my knees before the Father." What Father are you talking about? "The One whom every family in heaven and earth that derives its name, the Creator God, my Father, your Father, I have a prayer request." And I'm going to ask Him something. I'm going to ask that He would grant you something. And then I'm going to ask that He would grant you that something according to the riches of His glory. How rich is His glory? Very rich and that's how rich I want Him to grant you this. As rich as He is, that's how richly I want Him to give you this. I'm going to pray that He would give you in equal measure according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man. That's so great, so great. Paul says, "I just pray that you will be strengthened with the power of the Spirit which is in your inner man."

You say, "How much is...how much power is there?" Go to verse 20, "Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works within us." Did you get that? How much power is there? Power to do exceeding abundantly beyond all we can ask or think. An unimaginable, indescribable, incalculable amount of power is there by the Holy Spirit within us in the inner man. You see, your redeemed inner man is the dwelling place of the

powerful Holy Spirit who is God the third person who can do beyond what you can ask or think. Certainly He can energize the intimacy with God that the Spirit will give. He can also energize the revelation of God so you understand it. He can glorify Christ and shape you into His image. He can lead you personally. He can minister to you and through you in the assembly of redeemed saints. There's enough power to do that and beyond that and beyond what you could ask and beyond what you could think.

Paul experienced that power. He lived a very difficult life, a very lonely life, a very hard life from a physical standpoint and a spiritual standpoint, fighting on the physical level and the spiritual for survival. But he said this in 2 Corinthians 4, I'm reading from Phillips translation. It's very easy to understand what he was saying if you use that translation. Listen to these words, just listen as I read it, 2 Corinthians 4:8 and following: "We are handicapped," this is his personal testimony, "we are handicapped on all sides but we are never frustrated. We are puzzled but never in despair. We are persecuted but we never have to stand it alone. We may be knocked down but we are never knocked out. Every day we experience something of the death of the Lord Jesus so that we may also know the power of the life of Jesus in these bodies of ours. We are always facing death, but this means that you know more and more of life. This is the reason why we never collapse. The outward man does indeed suffer wear and tear but every day the inner man receives fresh strength." Isn't that great? That's the work of the Holy Spirit. That's the work of the Spirit.

Whatever the trials of life, the Spirit provides fresh strength so we can be handicapped without being frustrated. We can be puzzled without being in despair. We can be persecuted without having to stand it alone. We can be knocked down and never knocked out. We can be dying in the body but alive in our hearts. We can face death to bring people life. We never collapse. Even though the outer is wearing down and being torn up, the inner man is renewed with fresh strength every day. That's the work of the Spirit. I'll tell you, beloved, the ministry even today can be very, very painful, very discouraging, very heartbreaking. And on the outside you can be getting wear and tear that is unbelievable but if you live on the spiritual level there is constant flow of fresh strength all the time. And that's the Spirit of God.

Take it a dimension further about this strength and power of the Spirit. Look at 2 Corinthians chapter 10; 2 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 3. Here we find that there is even strength for spiritual conflict against Satan and all that he espouses and fabricates. Verse 3 talks about the fact that we walk in the flesh. It doesn't mean that as a sinful note but simply we're human beings. We are still living in human bodies with all of the foibles of our humanity with us. But though we are walking in the flesh though we're still human, we do not war according to the flesh. In other words, we don't fight spiritual warfare with fleshly weapons. The weapons of our warfare, look at verse 4, are not of the flesh. They're not manipulative. They're not human. But they are divinely powerful. We have really powerful weapons, prayer, the Word of God, the wisdom of God.

So, how powerful are they? They are so divinely powerful that they can destroy fortresses. The imagery here is just tearing to shreds the huge fortresses that Satan builds in this world. These weapons are so powerful they can destroy speculations or human ideas and ideals and values. They can tear down every lofty thing that man has raised up under Satan's power against the knowledge of God. They can take every single thought captive to the obedience of Christ. There's nothing we can't do.

On the positive side, you can be strengthened to do beyond all you can ask or think. On the

negative side, you have such spiritual strength if you live in the Spirit on the spiritual level that you can tear down every false system that Satan has built to stand in opposition against God if you use spiritual weapons living in the Spirit. So you see, the Holy Spirit is the source of our strength.

Now there's another element. I believe not only in the sense of accomplishing great things and of winning great spiritual warfare but I think in a third sense the Holy Spirit strengthens us just in the matter of carrying our burdens. John Calvin wrote, "The Spirit takes on Himself a part of the burden by which our weakness is oppressed so that He not only succors us but lifts us up as though He went under the burden for us." He is a Comforter. John 14:16, "He is another Comforter," and He'll come along and carry your cares and carry your burdens.

The Holy Spirit literally, if you can understand it this way, enfolds us in the fellowship of His strength, strength for spiritual ministry, strength for spiritual warfare, strength to bear our burdens. We could even add some things. The Holy Spirit gives us strength to overcome sin. If we walk in the Spirit we won't fulfill the lust of the flesh. So the Holy Spirit gives us power to overcome sin. The Holy Spirit gives us power to evangelize. "But you shall be witnesses after the Holy Spirit has come upon you," Acts 1:8. The Holy Spirit gives us the assurance of our eternal hope. He confirms in our hearts that our hope is eternal. Romans 15:13, "We abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." He empowers us in overcoming sin. He empowers us in witnessing. He empowers us in hoping for the glorious future that is ours. He empowers us for service. As I mention, in Ephesians chapter 3 verse 20, "We can do exceedingly abundantly above all we can ask or think." He empowers us for praise, Ephesians 5:18, "Filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." He empowers us for proper relationships. Ephesians 5, Spirit-filled husbands love their wives and Spirit-filled wives submit to their husbands. And Spirit-controlled children obey their parents and Spirit-controlled parents don't exasperate their children. And Spirit-controlled employers are gracious to their employees and Spirit-controlled employees submit to their employers. All human relations are changed by the Spirit-filled life.

So the Holy Spirit, you see, empowers us for effective service, for effective ministry, for effective warfare, for overcoming sin, for carrying our burdens, for witnessing, for all of these things, for praising God, for having right relationships. All that is energized by the Spirit. There are no human means to that. Let me say it simply. There is no technique for overcoming sin. There is no technique for being an effective witness. There are some helpful methods but apart from the Spirit they're useless. There is no technique to make someone sure about salvation. There is no technique to make someone effective in ministry. There is no technique to praise. There's no methodology to it that makes it more effective. There is no technique, there's no manipulation, there's no gimmicks that can make proper relationships in a home and a family or anywhere else. That is all the work of the Holy Spirit.

That's why I've said all along, if you walk in the Spirit you will not fulfill any of the lusts of the flesh. Therefore you will overcome sin, be an effective witness, have the confidence of salvation, serve God with power, praise God with freedom and have proper relationships. But we have taken the Holy Spirit out of all of this and substituted a myriad of things that are nothing more than some kind of methodology. And all the power to make full use of all the Spirit has given to us is circumvented.

There's one final feature. Seventh thing that the Holy Spirit does to perfect us and it comes along the line of this. You say, "Well, John, what about my failures, what about my sins? Do they stand in the way?" That's why I want to mention briefly, very briefly the seventh. The seventh is this. The

Holy Spirit intercedes for us before God. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us before God. This is so wonderful. Romans chapter 8 and you all know the greatness of that passage. But listen to this again. Romans chapter 8 verse 26, "The Spirit also" among all the other things Paul has been saying He does "the Spirit also helps our weakness." Now we just said that, that he strengthens us, He helps our weakness. But notice this, how does He do it? We don't know how to pray as we should. That's right. We don't know how to pray and we can't see the end from the beginning, we can't see the future, we can't even understand our own hearts. If we had to depend on our prayers to keep us saved, we'd be lost. That's right. And by the way, this whole chapter here is about the glorious liberation of the children of God, verse 21, when the creation will be set free. It's all about the time when we'll see Christ. It's all about our future salvation and glory. And what he is simply saying here is that we don't know how to keep ourselves saved. We don't know how to deal with our weaknesses.

Now listen carefully. Because we don't know how to deal with our weaknesses the Holy Spirit has to do that. Now listen to what I say. When you were saved your salvation was an eternal gift, right? But it isn't an eternal gift just because God said so, it's an eternal gift because He said it would be and He makes sure it is. Do you understand that...that God's promises to you are not accomplished just because He promises them? They are accomplished because He works to accomplish them. Do you understand that? So the reason that you are eternally secure is not because God said it, but because God said it He does it. So do you know how He secures you? He secures you eternally through the Holy Spirit.

Notice again verse 26, we don't know how to pray as we should. "But the Holy Spirit Himself intercedes for us." The Holy Spirit is constantly from within us interceding to the throne of God on our behalf all the time all the time all the time intervening for us. What a great statement. And He does it with groanings too deep for words, too profound for words. Look, this is the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity talking to God, the first member of the Trinity, in a divine language that could never be put into words. Every time somebody thinks that verse means speaking in tongues, I literally can't believe that anyone could assume that out of that verse. This is not people groaning in things that can be heard, this is the Holy Spirit groaning in what is too profound to be spoken. So the Holy Spirit is constantly interceding on our behalf.

And verse 27 says, "He who searches the hearts," that's God, He's the only one who can search the heart, "knows what the mind of the Spirit is." So now listen. The Holy Spirit living in you in perfect communion with the Father all the time interceding, interceding for you and the Father understands perfectly, perfectly, perfectly, the Holy Spirit understands the will of God perfectly, perfectly. So you have a perfect Holy Spirit praying perfect prayers about your needs, a perfect God who perfectly understands the perfect prayers of the perfect Holy Spirit.

And what's the result? Verse 28, as a result of that: "God causes all things to work together." They wouldn't otherwise if He didn't cause it, right? But He causes it in answer to the prayer of the Holy Spirit. So, "He causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." And what does He mean by that? What does He mean, "All things work together for good"? All things are working together for our glory, our eternal glory, that's what that means. It means ultimately our eternal glory. Please know that. It doesn't mean that every little thing in life is going to turn out good. No. It means that the Spirit of God interceding for you according to the will of God is why...is how God causes everything in the end to end up in your glory. Someday, verse 29 says, you'll be in the image of His Son. Someday, verse 30 says, you'll be

glorified. And then verse 31 to 39 says, "And nothing can change it, nothing can separate you from it at all." Why? It's the work of the Spirit.

Beloved, that's an unbelievable promise, isn't it? No matter what may be going on in our life, sin, failure, no matter how ignorant and stupid we are and don't know how to pray as we ought, we can't keep ourselves saved, we don't even know where to get in touch with the sin of our lives in all cases. We could never confess it all to God, we don't even know it all. We don't even see it all. But the Spirit continually intercedes, continually pleads to God. And then in Hebrews 7:25, it says, "And Jesus Christ ever lives to make intercession for us." So you have the Spirit of God interceding. You have the Son of God interceding. Is it any wonder all things are working together for good? And what is that good for which they work? It is the good of our eternal glory. He intercedes for us.

So even in those times, those frequent times when we fail, nonetheless He intercedes. And we will not ultimately fail because He will pray for us and God will answer and strengthen us. It's a marvelous thing. It's almost a cycle. The Holy Spirit sees sin in our life. He prays to the Father for the cleansing of that sin. And the Father then forgives the sin. And the Holy Spirit energizes righteousness. He is the pleader and He is the empowerer at the same time. That's His ministry to us; marvelous, marvelous ministry.

Yeah, Paul never said, "If the biblical solutions don't work, get an appointment with a Greek philosopher down the street." Never. The Spirit is sufficient.

Now only one thing remains. If all of this is available on the spiritual level, how do I get myself from where I am to living on that level? And the answer is, you must walk in the Spirit. And next week I'm going to give the closing message on what it means to walk in the Spirit and how you do that. Okay? So you be with us next time. Let's pray.

Thank You, our Father, again for the great truth of Your Word and how it rings in our hearts with its truthfulness. Thank You for the Spirit of God in us and we pray, oh God, that we might know the fullness of His power in our lives as we walk. God, we ask that You would take sin out of us, cleanse us, clean us. We thank You for the interceding work of the Holy Spirit on our behalf that keeps us secure forever, that constantly, constantly keeps us in right relationship to You, even in spite of our sin. We thank You for that work. We thank You for the strength with which He infuses our service, our warfare, the strength by which He carries our burdens and cares. Oh God, what can we say for all that the Spirit has done for us? And, Holy Spirit, we say to You, we love You, we thank You for this ministry and we ask that You might enable us even beyond our understanding to nonetheless walk in Your power as You energize it in us, to even do what we cannot explain but can only experience as we yield our lives to Your control, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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