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Walking as Jesus Walked



Cultivating Christian Character - Steve Gregg

In "Walking as Jesus Walked", Steve Gregg discusses cultivating Christian character and the importance of walking in the Spirit. He emphasizes that becoming a mature Christian is about inward change, not just outward behavior. He also reminds listeners that stumbling in faith is inevitable, but with perseverance and a surrendered will to God, one can fulfill the righteous requirements of the law. Gregg encourages listeners to walk with wisdom, obedience, love, and humility, and to trust in the Holy Spirit to guide their steps.

Transcript

I'm Steve Gregg. I'm the author of this lecture series on the topic of cultivating Christian character. And last time we were defining holiness as the character of God reproduced in us.

Paul said that he labored, as it were, in birth pangs again for the Galatians. In Galatians 4.19 he said, how I labor again in birth pangs until Christ be formed in you. This is his goal.

He said elsewhere that he labors toward this end that he might present every man perfect in Christ. Now, I don't teach a doctrine of sinless perfection. There are some who do.

And I do not wish to debate that matter with them at this time. But I will say this, that is not my position. I don't believe that the Bible teaches that we come to a state of sinless perfection in this life.

But I do believe that we are to come to maturity. And the word perfect, the Greek word that in the New Testament is often translated perfect, generally speaking means mature, complete. And Paul said he desires to present every man perfect or mature or complete in Christ.

So it was not Paul's desire merely to get people to cross the line into the church door, to get them to get their names written in heaven merely. But having gotten to that point, he saw that as the beginning of a journey. It was not the end.

The end of the journey is when we are completely like Christ, which as I understand Scripture does not really happen until we see him as he is. It says that in 1 John 3, I think verse 2 says, Beloved, now are we the sons of God and doth not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is.

And we know that although we will not be exactly like him until we see him as he is and his coming, yet we are to become more like him with every passing day. Or at least every passing period of time. I don't know if we're more like him every single day.

I don't want to use hyperbole here, but I do believe that the net progress of our lives should register improvement in the goal, toward the goal of becoming like Jesus. And Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3, verse 18, that we all with unveiled faces beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are changed, transformed from glory to glory into that same image. So that's the starting assumptions for this series, that God wants us to be changed.

He wants us to be transformed in the image of Christ. This transformation is registered in the area that we would call character. Last time we looked at a large number of passages which defined some of the things that that are the image of Christ in us that God is looking for justice and mercy and compassion and faithfulness and humility.

These kinds of things. That's character. And so a person of character is one who is changed inwardly and that inward change is reflected in outward patterns of life.

Now, the scripture says in 1 John 2 and verse 6, he who says he abides in him, that is, anyone who claims to abide in Christ, ought himself also to walk just as he walked. 1 John 2, 6. Anyone who says he abides in Christ ought to walk just like Jesus walked, ought to walk even as he walked. Now, how did Jesus walk? That's what I'd like to talk about tonight.

I'd like to talk about walking even as Jesus walked. Sounds like a rather stiff goal to try to reach, to walk just like Jesus. Obviously, walking has to do with outward behavior.

We do have concern in this series and we will have a lot to say about the change, the inward change that is needed because we need to be changed inwardly from glory to glory into his image. But there is an outwardness about it, too. The outward patterns of life are the way that inward change expresses itself.

And those patterns of life are what the Bible metaphorically refers to as walking. Walking. The Bible often talks about the need for us to walk worthy of the calling or to walk in the light or to walk in love or to walk in the truth or to walk in this or to walk in that.

The word walk, of course, is a metaphor for living. And so to walk as Jesus walked is to

live in the outward forms of our life the way that Jesus lived. Again, not in the circumstantial patterns of his life.

I mean, he was a nomadic preacher. Not everyone is required to be a nomadic preacher. He spent part of his life as a carpenter.

Not everyone is required to be a carpenter. He gathered twelve men around him. Not everyone has to do that.

Some of the things Jesus did were his vocational distinctives, but the character of Jesus, the way his character, his goodness, his holiness, his righteousness, his purity was manifested in his actions, is the way that his walk is to be set forth as an example for us to walk in exactly the same way. Now, most of us have a problem in this area. That's an understatement.

I probably should say all of us have a problem in this area, but I didn't want to speak for you because I don't know if you do or not for sure. I suspect you do. And that is that we do, we have changed.

We are different than we were when we were converted in some ways. I mean, perhaps before you got converted, maybe you had a foul mouth or maybe you had a problem with drinking or maybe you used drugs or maybe you chased women or chased men or used pornography or did some of those things. Of course, when people get saved, usually those are some of the first things to go if they really get saved.

I say if they really get saved because I'm sad to know of people who are in the church who appear to be saved in many respects and profess to be saved, but still have ongoing problems with these things. And I will not say these people aren't saved because I know that Christians still struggle with sins. But I would say those grosser, more obvious sins are the sins that usually fall away quickest.

It's the subtler sins, those sins that are deep down inside that aren't so scandalous that we sometimes let stay for a while because no one's really picking on us about those things. Everyone in the church does those things. Gossip, envy, losing your temper once in a while, those kinds of things really, you know, everybody does that, right? Nobody's perfect.

And because nobody's perfect, an awful lot of people don't feel there's any hope to strive to be perfect. Well, Paul didn't think that way. Paul said, I'm not already perfect.

But he said, this one thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind and looking to the things that are before, I press on toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And since he indicated that although he was not perfect, we might think that he would say, and therefore, I don't bother myself much about it. That's how many Christians are.

They get over the more scandalous sins of life so that they don't bring too much shame on the church and their family. And then they just cruise the rest of the time and say, as long as I don't lose the faith before the rapture or before I die, then all is well. But all may not be well.

And when they sin in large or small ways, many times they will nobody's perfect, which is technically true, with the exception of the one person that we have to be like. You see, if you're comparing yourself with others, you're not wise, Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter in comparing themselves among themselves. They're not wise, he said.

Why? Because on the day of judgment, you're not going to be compared to them. Doesn't make any sense to measure yourself on the scale that isn't going to be the scale that you're measured by. We are to be like Jesus, and if we are not like Jesus, he happens to be perfect and we are imperfect.

And when we say nobody's perfect, we're not telling the exact truth because Jesus is and we're supposed to walk like him. Now, it is true that no human being that I've ever met and probably none that I ever will meet other than Jesus is perfect. But many Christians use that as an excuse for imperfection.

Well, I'm not perfect, but nobody's perfect. But as a matter of fact, Paul said, I'm not perfect. He could have easily said nobody's perfect, but he didn't consider that an excuse for apathy or for complacency.

He said, but I do this. I forget what's mine. I press on.

I press on. I press on toward the mark of the high calling of God. Christ is I'm not perfect, but I'm not going to be content to be where I am.

Not satisfied anyway. The psalmist said in Psalm 1715, he said, I will be satisfied when I awake with my likeness. That's when we can be satisfied when we awake in the image of Christ.

First, that'll be in the resurrection. In the meantime, we press on and we must become more so. But although we have our times where we exhibit probably commendable righteousness and holiness and goodness, probably if you're like most of us, it's not entirely consistent.

It's frustratingly inconsistent. And you're not the only one frustrated. God gets frustrated, too.

Do you know that? Certainly sounds like it to me, at least. And I read the scriptures. If you look at the book of Hosea, Hosea is what God is actually complaining through the prophet about the inconsistency of Israel.

They would repent or seemingly repent. And then before you knew it, they were back grumbling and sinning and doing all the wrong things again that they assumed to have repented of. And he says to them, this is Israel, the northern kingdom addressed as Ephraim in Hosea, six, four, he says, oh, Ephraim, what shall I do to you? Oh, Judah, what shall I do to you for your faithfulness is like a morning cloud and like the early dew, it goes away.

They're supposed to be faithful to God and they are once in a while on those occasions that they are. It doesn't last very long. It's like a morning cloud or like dew that is there in the morning, but it's not there very long.

Sun comes up and it all evaporates and there's nothing left to show of it. And that's what Israel and Judah's righteousness and faithfulness and goodness in their in terms of their faithfulness to God was like. I wonder how much he thinks that about us.

You might say, well, he doesn't see my unrighteousness. He just sees Jesus when he looks at me. That's interesting.

On the day of judgment, he's going to judge your men according to their works. Maybe he'll put on better glasses then so he can really see what you're like. But I have a feeling he sees what you're like now.

If you've been told God doesn't see you, he just sees Jesus when he looks at you. That's a nice preaching device, but it's not something stated in the scripture. The fact is that the righteousness of Christ is ours, imputed to us by faith.

That's wonderful. That's why we're saved. That's why we're going to heaven instead of going to hell.

But that doesn't mean that God isn't paying attention to the way you're living. Jesus said every idle word a man shall speak, he'll give account of it in the day of judgment. He's paying close attention.

That number of hairs on your head are numbered. He's keeping track of everything. And so he must look at us sometimes and he hears our bold resolutions and our holy emotions and so forth to be godly and to stop doing those things that we do that are wrong.

But I'll bet in many cases you'd have to say it's like the morning cloud, like the dew on the grass. You have a great resolution, you resolve to do it, you do it for a little while, and then it's gone. And you're not doing what's right anymore.

That apparently is not only a frustration to you, if it is, I hope it is a frustration to you. Hope you're not content that way. But it's apparently a frustration to God, too.

In Jeremiah chapter 2 and verse 20, again, God is complaining about Israel and Judah. He says, For of old I have broken your yoke and burst your bonds. And you said, I will not transgress.

When on every high hill and under every green tree you lay down playing the harlot, he's talking about idolatry here in the figure of adultery, spiritual adultery that they committed. They said, I won't transgress. And they probably meant it.

Remember at Mount Sinai, when God gave the Ten Commandments, they said all that the Lord has said will do it. And they did, for a few days. And then, of course, they worshipped the golden calf, and that was not what he said to do.

And so they and we have a lot in common, but there's some things that we don't have in common with them. We have Jesus, we have the Holy Spirit, we have some resources that they didn't have, and it's not supposed to be that we are so inconsistent. It might be thought excusable to some, in some measure, that those who lived before the grace of Jesus came, before the Holy Spirit was given to abide in them and to transform and sanctify them inwardly, that in times before that, that they might not be very consistent.

Although God didn't show infinite tolerance with them, even. But there's not very much excuse for us, because we have resources given to us. The question is, are we aware of them and do we use them? And I believe that that is important for us to ask ourselves and find answers to, because God does desire that we live like Jesus and walk like he walked.

It is a frustration, not only to God, but also to the believer. If you'll turn with me to Romans 7, we'll venture into a very controversial passage. In fact, as likely as not, at least half of you here, if not more, will have a different interpretation than I do of this.

Although it's not as if I have an unusual one, it's just that the body of Christ kind of split up about the interpretation of this passage, and it's fairly evenly split, as far as I can tell. But in Romans chapter seven, verses 15 through 25, Paul speaks in such a way that most of us can relate to. For what I am doing, I do not understand.

For what I will to do that I do not practice. But what I hate that I do. If then I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.

But now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me that is in my flesh, nothing good dwells for to will is present with me. But how to perform what is good, I do not find.

For the good that I will to do, I do not do. But the evil that I will not to do that I practice. Now, if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

I find then a law that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight

in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. That does not sound very satisfying, the last line there.

In fact, it is so unsatisfying. It is such an anti-climax after he says, I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. It sounds like he has got the solution.

It is all fixed now. But then the last line is just as bad as the lines before the solution. It is such an anti-climax that some scholars, I think without validity, have transposed that last verse into an early part of the discussion because they think that the I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord should be the last line.

Because it does not sound very much a thing to be thankful for, to say I serve sin with my body. And that is the last thing he says. Now, there are a variety of interpretations of this passage.

On the one hand, there are those who believe that Paul is talking about his experience present at the time of writing. And there are, on the other hand, those who believe that Paul is writing hypothetically or as if he was somebody else, not himself. But maybe describing a carnal Christian or an unspirit filled Christian.

There are some who believe that Paul is describing his own life before he was converted as a Pharisee. Where he was interested in the law of God, fascinated with the law of God, but did not have the power to keep it. There are a lot of theories as to what Paul is talking about.

I will tell you what I think and it will displease some of you, but I will give you my reasons. I believe that Paul is not describing his pre-conversion life. I don't believe he is talking about the way it was before he was saved.

I don't even think he is talking about a carnal Christian, if we could use that term. I believe that he is talking about something that is true in his own experience, even in the point of life that he finds himself as he writes this epistle. Now, that is unsatisfying to people.

One reason people don't like that or feel like they can't accept that is because earlier, in Romans chapter 6, Paul said, Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace. And if sin shall not have dominion over you, Paul said that is normative, that it should not. And also in Romans 6 he said, Do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies.

And yet, how then could Paul himself, a spiritual man and an apostle, speak as if sin does get the better of him sometime? And so some feel that there is a high standard of sanctification in chapter 6 that suggests sin not reigning in your mortal body, and sin not having control over you. And then this sounds like a step backward from there. Like Paul is talking about, he has this desire to do what is right, but he doesn't do what is right.

There is this sin thing in him, giving him problems. And so, some have felt like Paul cannot possibly be talking about himself, at least not in any current status that he was in. Furthermore, I didn't read the verse that this comes from, but the previous verse to that which we began reading at, verse 14, he says, We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold unto sin.

Now, some people say, Well, Paul obviously isn't talking about himself. He's a spiritual Christian. He's not a carnal Christian.

So he must be talking about either an unsaved person or a carnal Christian. Now, this is the argument for it being not Paul talking about himself. I disagree with those arguments, though.

First of all, I don't believe that Romans chapter 6 is talking about sanctification. In the structure of the epistle of Romans, I believe it can be demonstrated that Romans 6 is talking about justification by faith. Sanctification doesn't come up until this chapter.

Actually, it's chapter 8. And we won't get into that right now. But when Paul says, I am carnal, the word carnal just means fleshly. He doesn't mean he's carnally minded.

Now, in chapter 8 he says, To be carnally minded is death. But you can be carnal, that is fleshly, without being fleshly minded. You have a flesh.

You're a fleshly being. You've got a body. And isn't that pretty much where the problems come from most of the time in the temptations you have? You've got a body.

Paul had a body. He could say he was fleshly and that was what he did say. But there's a very great problem in saying that Paul was not talking about his current situation or a normal Christian situation.

One is that no matter how spiritual the person is, I've never met anyone who couldn't relate with this frustration. It'd be an interesting thing if Paul could not possibly have been writing about his real life situation and had to be writing about some subnormal thing when I've never met a person really who couldn't relate with this. That must mean there's no one who's normal.

If this doesn't apply to Paul in his current state, then he's the only one I know who doesn't apply to. James said, In many things we all stumble, including himself, an apostle. There is stumbling.

John said, These things I write unto you that ye sin not. But if you do sin, we have an advocate with the Father. John didn't teach us sinless perfection.

He urged us not to sin. He said, I write this so that you won't. But if you do, we have an advocate.

Sinless perfection is not found in James. It's not found in John. And as far as I can tell, it's not found in Paul.

He said, I'm not perfect yet. In fact, we find some imperfection in the book of Acts. I asked him to have an argument with Barnabas and splitting up over that.

And I don't know if it's Paul or Barnabas who's the problem, but Barnabas was an apostle too. And not one of the twelve, but he's called an apostle in the scripture. Peter and Paul had conflicts.

According to Galatians chapter 2, someone was wrong there. It was Peter, apparently. At least we're only hearing Paul's side of the story, but I'm assuming Peter was the one who was wrong.

In any case, whether it was Peter or Paul, they're both apostles. And they're not supposed to be wrong, right? But one of them was. So even an apostle in the Bible is not a perfect person without sin.

Only the Pope is in that condition. But actually, I'm not sure that the Pope is either. But the fact of the matter is, in fact, of course, the Pope is not.

But Paul does not describe something here, I think, that he cannot himself relate to. And I'll tell you why. Earlier in the chapter, he does describe his spiritual struggles before he was saved.

He says a little earlier in the earlier verses, I was alive without the law once. But when the law came, the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And I found that that which was good awakened in me evil things, and it slew me, and so forth and so on.

It's all past tense. But now in this section, it's all present tense. I try to do what's right, but I don't do what's right.

I try to not do what's wrong, but I do what's wrong. I find this to be a problem. Now, he was talking in the past tense at an earlier point of his non-Christian life.

Now he's talking in the present. Furthermore, he also says this twice. He says in verse 17 and in verse 20, But now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

And also in verse 20, If I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. Notice the expression no longer. No longer means not anymore.

It's different now than it used to be. Something has changed when something is no longer the way it was. Okay.

What has changed? Well, it's no longer I who am doing it. Well, when was it I who was doing it? Before I repented. Before I was a Christian.

When I sinned, I was expressing my own sinful path that I had chosen. I was walking in sin. I had no problems with it.

It was the life I chose. But that's no longer the way it is. When I do it now, it goes against who I am.

It goes against my grain. It's no longer who I am. It's something else in me that I don't like.

This can only be true after conversion. And when he says, It's no longer I who sin, but sin that dwells in me. He is saying that there has been a change from an earlier condition.

That is no longer the case. What was that earlier condition? Certainly it must have been his pre-conversion condition. Then what is the present condition? It must be his post-conversion condition.

Furthermore, can anyone really see any distinctive difference between this passage and the very, very similar verse in Galatians 5.17 where Paul says, The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit lusteth against the flesh. And these two are contrary to one another so that you cannot do the things you want to do. Now, that's not past tense.

That's not talking hypothetically. He's talking to his readers who are Christians. He says, The flesh and the spirit are at war with each other, and it does not allow them to do everything right as they would like to do.

Now, how then, if this is so, how then can we even talk about cultivating Christian character? How can we even talk about being transformed in the image of Christ if, in fact, Paul himself indicated there was an ongoing struggle? He certainly indicated there was an ongoing struggle to the Galatian Christians when he said that in Galatians 5.17. And he seemed to imply in Romans 7 that he knew the struggle well enough. And he did. But notice what he said at the end of Romans 7. Not the part, I thank my God through Jesus Christ our Lord, although that's the highest point in the whole discussion.

But, very instructively, what he said after that. The last sentence in Romans 7. So then with the mind, I myself, or I by myself, it's emphatic in the Greek, I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. That is, by myself, left to myself, in my own resources, the best I can do is serve the law of God with my mind.

That is, my mind can agree to it, but I can't do it. My body does not permit it. My body is

enslaved to sin.

Left to myself. I myself can't do better than this. But, he goes on in chapter 8 to point out that there is a better way that he can do.

Now you might say, well Steve, if you're telling me that Romans 8 says there's a better way that's different than Romans 7, then aren't we saying then that Romans 7 is not normative? Well, what is the better way? Look at Romans 8 verse 4, if you would. Romans 8 verse 4, Paul says that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. Now notice this.

The righteous requirements of the law, that's the things that in chapter 7 Paul said his mind agreed with, but he found himself always stumbling, not quite living up to it. Those righteous requirements that the law holds. With my mind I embrace the law of God, he said, but with my body and my members is a problem.

Now, Paul says it's possible in your life, in your behavior, to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law. And how is that done? By not walking in the flesh. But by walking in the Spirit.

Now, you might say, well, didn't Paul walk in the Spirit? If Paul walked in the Spirit, then how would Romans 7 be applicable to him? You know, it's interesting, I mentioned Galatians 5.17 is very similar to Romans 7. Galatians 5.16 is very similar to Romans 8, because Galatians 5.16 says, This I say, walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. That's a tremendous promise. Now, Paul in Romans 7 is talking about fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, even though he wants to do something better than that.

But he says, if you walk in the Spirit, you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. You will not, in other words, live after the flesh. So the key, obviously, is to walk in the Spirit.

If we're to walk as Jesus walked, how did He walk? He walked in the Spirit. And if you walk in the Spirit, you do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Now, what about Romans 7 then? Well, when you do the things you hate, you are not walking in the Spirit.

That doesn't mean you weren't walking in the Spirit five minutes earlier, and it doesn't mean you won't be walking in the Spirit a minute later. It means, when you fall into sin, you are not, at that moment, walking in the Spirit. Now, it's very important that we understand walking.

We've got this metaphor used throughout the Scripture, and it's a good one. What does it mean to walk in the Spirit? Why doesn't it say, flow in the Spirit? Well, you know the Bible never says to flow in the Spirit. The metaphor is never used, as far as I know, of flowing in the Spirit.

But walking in the Spirit is used, and the reason is, because our life in the Spirit is not so

much like a flowing as a walking. And how are those two things different? Well, if you jump into a raging river that's flowing downstream, you'll soon be flowing downstream. In fact, if you're more than about waist deep, it's going to be carrying you along, even against your will.

You may not be able to get out. Wherever that river goes, you'll go, inevitably. And you'll have nothing to say about it.

That's not the way a life in the Spirit is. You don't just dive in, and from then on, the Holy Spirit carries you wherever He wants you to go, and you never have anything to say about it, you never have any control. That is not a metaphor that the Scripture uses of our life in the Spirit.

Walking is much different than that. Walking is made up of individual increments, called steps. And flowing isn't.

There's no increments in flowing, it's just all one continuous flow. But walking is made up of individual steps. And if you can walk in the Spirit, you can also walk in the flesh.

In fact, Paul said the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in us, who are not walking after the flesh, but we're walking after the Spirit. Now, if you find that the righteous requirements of the law are being fulfilled in your life, you must be walking in the Spirit at that time. But if you find yourself submitting to the flesh, you must be not walking in the Spirit at that time, because if you walk in the Spirit, you will not fulfill the demands of the flesh.

So, obviously, walking in the Spirit is something that can be done with more or less consistency. You do not simply get a second work of grace, as near as I can tell. I wish that was so.

I really and truly do believe that there exists a second work of grace. You just kind of get that one-time deal, and then you don't have to walk in the Spirit any more. You don't have to think about it.

You just walk in the Spirit all the time, automatically. I don't know of anyone, including the Apostles, who did that. Walked in the Spirit all the time.

And, like I said, James said, in many things, we all stumble, including himself. Stumbling is when you're not walking as you should. You trip and fall.

Now, walking in the Spirit means that each time you take a step, it needs to be a step in the Spirit. Now, I'm not just going to resort to clichés tonight. I'm going to talk very practically about what that really means.

But I just want you to get the concept. To walk as Jesus walked means that we must walk

in the Spirit, and that means that each step that we take should be in the Spirit. If each step I take is in the Spirit, I will not fulfill the lust of flesh.

What are we calling steps here? What's a step? And, I mean, that's a metaphor, too. We're not really talking about walking literally and taking literal steps. In speaking of the Christian life as a walk, obviously there is something being conveyed.

The idea is we're going somewhere. We're making progress somewhere. And as time goes by, when you're walking in a certain direction, you get closer to that thing.

And each step you take gets you closer to it. Now, we have a goal. That goal is to be like Jesus.

Our progress to that goal is compared with walking. And each step we take refers, I think, to the decisions we make day by day. Shall I answer back in a heated spirit this person who's shouting at me? Or shall I hold my tongue? Or shall I answer in a better spirit? I mean, what am I going to do? Whatever I do is my next step, right? You know, there's these guys telling dirty jokes here on the job site.

And, you know, I'm afraid if I hang around, I'm going to be laughing with them. And I'm going to spoil my testimony. What should I do? Well, that defines your next step.

Every time you make a decision in some area like this, you're going to either make progress toward your goal, or you're going to probably sidestep the goal somewhere and miss the opportunity to make progress toward holiness. And I believe that when we think of steps in the Christian walk, we're thinking of individual decisions that are made. To do the right thing or to do the wrong thing.

To trust in God or not to trust in God. To walk in the Spirit. To do what pleases the Spirit and what the Spirit enables us to do.

Or to not do that. That is what I think steps refer to. And Jesus is the only person so far who did this all the time.

Never tripped, as far as we know. Now, children, when they're learning to walk, generally don't walk perfectly. In fact, on very rare occasions, I've heard of children who seem to walk almost perfectly the first time they took one step, they just took off across the room.

That's not very common. That's not the normal thing. Children usually take a step, maybe two, and then they're down.

But they get up again and they take a few more steps and they're down again. And yet, everyone's excited about the steps they've taken because that's progress. The fact that they're down, that they fall down, is not all that exciting.

It's a little disappointing when they fall, but not greatly so. You don't expect babies, or just learning to take their steps, you don't expect them to never fall. But you do expect that as they get older, they don't fall very often.

You expect that as a child walks more and becomes more proficient at it, they don't fall down very much. They are more successful. They take more steps in a row between falling.

When you get about my age, you don't fall down very often. You get a little older, you fall down a lot more often. Not too much older than me.

But you know, you get good at this. You get consistent at it. But you never come to the place where you can become careless about it.

Because grown-ups, who don't fall very often, often do fall when they're being careless. When you step out on the ice, or you trip over something in the dark, or you just trip over someone in the light. Sometimes you trip over someone's foot.

I mean, sometimes, even adults, who very rarely misstep, they do fall, they do trip. It's less common for them. And it usually happens when they're being careless.

Now, walking in the Spirit is something that requires consistently taking the right steps with Jesus. And Jesus did this all the time. Now, you need to realize that when Jesus lived a holy and perfect life, it wasn't unfair for us to be compared with Him in this.

You know, I say, it's not fair. He was God. I'm not God.

I'm a fallen man. Jesus was God. How come I have to be like Him? How come I have to be compared with Him? It's an unfair comparison.

But you know, when Jesus came to earth, although He was God, He was God in the flesh. And in the flesh meant He had the infirmities of human flesh. Now, I believe He even had the capability of sinning, though He never did so.

There are some Christians who don't believe that He was capable of sinning. Those who believe that Jesus could not sin, that doctrine is called the impeccability of Christ. Because He was God, and God can't sin, therefore Jesus couldn't possibly sin either.

However, that's not a very good argument. I mean, true, God can't sin, but God can't be tempted with evil either. But the Bible says that Jesus was tempted.

You see, Jesus in the flesh was able to be tempted, and presumably could have sinned had He succumbed. There's many things God can't do that Jesus did do. Like God never gets tired.

He never slumbers. He never is weary or faint. Jesus got weary and faint.

Sometimes fell asleep in the boat when they were going across the sea. He was so tired, even the storm didn't wake Him. We read in John chapter 4 that Jesus sat down at the well because He was weary with travel.

And He was thirsty and He asked the woman to give Him a drink. God doesn't get weary or thirsty, but Jesus did. You see, the Bible says in Philippians chapter 2 verse 5, it says, Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus, who though He existed in the form of God and did not think equality with God a thing to be grasped, He emptied Himself, it says in the Greek, it reads a little differently in the New King James, it says He made Himself of no reputation following the King James.

But that's a slavish following of the King James in that case. In the Greek it says He made Himself of no reputation and took on Himself the form of a servant. And having been found in the form of man, He humbled Himself unto death, even the death of the cross.

Now when the Bible says He existed in the form of God, but He emptied Himself and took on the form of a servant, what did He empty Himself of? Well, we can tell by reading the Gospels, He emptied Himself of some of those objective attributes. Like omniscience, He didn't know everything when He was on the earth. They said, when will it be? He said, I don't know.

The angels don't know, no man knows, I don't even know, He said, only the Father knows that. Well, if there's one thing that Jesus didn't know, then He's not omniscient when He was here. Even the things, you know, He got tired.

Before He came to earth as a man, He never got tired. God doesn't get tired. He doesn't get weary.

When Jesus became a man, He took on flesh. And with flesh, He took on weakness. And He lived under handicaps very much like those that we live under every day.

Sure, He had some advantages. He'd seen God face to face, that helps. But the fact is, when He came to earth as a little baby, laying in a manger, He did not have omnipotence and omnipresence as He sat later in that crib.

And He had to learn to walk. He had to learn to talk. He had to learn to read.

He didn't know all those things the moment He was born. The Bible says in Luke chapter 2 that the child Jesus increased in stature and in wisdom. He obviously wasn't born having all wisdom, or else how could you increase in that? He increased in wisdom and stature just like any growing boy does.

He took on a human handicap so that He could be truly part of Adam's race and redeem Adam's race as one of us. He was God in there, but something in the mystery of the Incarnation made Him subject to things that He was not subject to before He came to

earth. And because of that, He lived in infirmity, human infirmity.

Now you might say, well, Steve, that doesn't make sense, because I read of Jesus telling the future, and knowing what people are thinking, and seeing people before they're even visible. You know, Nathaniel under the fig tree, and I hear Him, I see Him doing miraculous things, commanding the sea to stand still when it's storming, and raising the dead. I mean, are you telling me that's human infirmity? No, that's not human infirmity.

That's the Spirit of God. That's the work of the Holy Spirit in Him. So He said, anyway.

In Matthew 12, 28, Jesus said, If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you. Actually, that Jesus would be filled with the Holy Spirit was predicted in the Old Testament prophets. In Isaiah chapter 11, an indisputed messianic prophecy, speaking of Jesus, it says in Isaiah 11, 1 and 2, There shall come forth a rod from the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. Now you might say, yeah, I saw those things in Jesus. Well, guess what? That's the same Spirit who dwells in you.

That's the same Spirit you're supposed to walk in, too. The Spirit of wisdom and of knowledge and of judgment, the fear of the Lord, and all that stuff. That's the same Spirit that's in you.

The same Spirit was in Him. In Isaiah 61, 1, again, Jesus is the speaker. We know this because Jesus quoted this in Luke 4, when He's preaching in the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth.

And He applied it to Himself. But it says in Isaiah 61, 1, again, about the Messiah, it says, The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, the opening of the prison to those who are bound.

This is the anointing of the Holy Spirit that was on Jesus. That's the same Spirit with whom we have been anointed. Paul said in Romans chapter 8, If the same Spirit that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then He shall quicken you, your mortal bodies, by the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead.

Jesus operated through the Holy Spirit. In Acts chapter 1, verses 1 and 2, Luke certainly gives us that theology. Acts chapter 1 and verses 1 and 2, Luke says, In my first treatise, O Theophilus, he says, I made account of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day that He was taken up, after He, through the Holy Spirit, had given commandments to His apostles.

He gave commandments to the apostles through the Holy Spirit. His teaching was a spiritual gift. It was the Holy Spirit's gift of teaching.

When Jesus healed, it was the Holy Spirit's gift of healing. When Jesus prophesied, it was the Holy Spirit's gift of prophecy. When Jesus had a word of knowledge about something, it was the Holy Spirit's gift of the word of knowledge.

Jesus operated through the Holy Spirit, and there was not one of the gifts of the Spirit that did not operate through Him, except, as far as we know, tongues, an interpretation of tongues. We don't know of Him ever doing those. There's no record of it.

But the rest of the spiritual gifts that are listed in Scripture were all operative in Him. And consistently. But it was not that He was walking around lacking in our infirmities.

He shared in our infirmities. That's why He's a merciful and just high priest. Because He is not a high priest who could not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but in all points became like us.

And was tempted in all points like we are yet, without sin. So through the Holy Spirit, Jesus did what we are called to do. To walk in the Spirit and to gain victory over the flesh in our lives.

That is a possibility, though it's very rare to find Christians who actually do it. I liken this to Jesus walking on the water. This miracle of Jesus walking on the water is found in three of the Gospels.

Matthew and Mark and John. And in John's Gospel, you know, there's not very many miracles recorded in John's Gospel, but there's about the same number of miracles in John's Gospel as there are sayings of Jesus that begin with the words, I am I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world.

I am the resurrection of life. I am the way, the truth, the life. I am the true vine.

There are, I think, eight of those statements in the Gospel of John. And interestingly enough, John seems to record one miracle per saying that starts with I am. In other words, John was selective in recording miracles of Jesus.

He only did the ones that seemed to illustrate one of the things Jesus said about himself. So, Jesus said, I am the true vine. And we read of the miracle of him turning water into wine, which is what vines do.

Vines take water from the environment and turn it into wine, ultimately. He is the true vine and he turns water into wine. He says, I am the resurrection of life.

He raises a man from the dead on the same occasion. He says, I am the bread of life. He feeds a multitude.

I am the light of the world. He opens the eyes of a blind man. All these things are there in John.

They're not always in the same passages, but John, if you find each of them, there is an I am saying of Jesus. Now, Jesus said in John 14, 6, I am the way. What do you do with a way? What's a way? A way is a path.

A way is something you walk in. I am the way. I am the truth.

I am the life. And to walk in Christ means we walk in the way that he walked, in him. Now, interestingly, there is a miracle in the gospel of John that seems to illustrate that.

How did Jesus walk? Well, John happens to record in John chapter 6, Jesus walking on the water. As Matthew and Mark also record the same miracle. Jesus walked on water.

I don't suppose that surprises any of you. That's a well-known miracle. But, have you ever thought about it this way? Peter walked on water too.

Now, you know the story. Only Matthew gives this much detail. Mark and John don't mention Peter walking on the water.

But Matthew tells us that when Jesus came walking on the sea to the disciples who were in the boat, they were afraid and Jesus said, don't be afraid, it is I. And Peter said, if it's really you, Lord, command me to come to you on the water. And Jesus said, come. And he did.

And he walked on the water. He walked even as Jesus walked. Now, the interesting thing about that is walking on the water is impossible.

It is humanly impossible. Do you know that living a completely holy and righteous life by yourself is impossible? It's humanly impossible. Because we're fallen.

Because we have the flesh. And the flesh wars against the spirit. So you cannot do the thing you will.

At least not all the time. Not in your own strength you can't. You can't walk on water even.

Now, in the scripture it says, he that abides in Jesus, let him walk even as Jesus walked. Think about Jesus walking on water. How do you walk like Jesus walked? He walked in ways people can't walk.

His walk was a supernatural walk. And walking on water is a good illustration of that. That's a supernatural way of walking.

But even though it was supernatural and humanly impossible, Jesus isn't the only one

who did it. Someone else did it. Peter.

And he was a mere man. He was not God incarnate. And he walked even as Jesus walked.

For a while. Like us. Sometimes we do for a little while and then we don't.

But what was it? The command of Christ always brings with it the power to obey if we will believe. I don't believe that God ever gives a command that He does not intend to enable us to obey if we will. God's not unreasonable.

And that is why Peter didn't just jump out of the water. He said, Lord, if that's really you, tell me to come. Why? Because if you don't tell me, I can't do it.

That's humanly impossible. But if you tell me to do it, I know I can do that. Because if you tell me, I know that you will enable me.

Because you won't command me to do something that you won't help me do. And so Jesus said, okay, come. I'm commanding you.

Come on the water. Jesus commanded Peter to walk even as He walked on the water. To walk a supernatural walk.

And you know what? Peter didn't. Until what? Until his eyes were diverted from where they should have been. They began to look at the challenges in the environment.

He began to look at what he was up against. Instead of looking at Jesus, and sure enough, he couldn't do it. He sunk.

He just became Peter again. He couldn't walk on water any more than any of the disciples could in his own flesh. Now, what's very encouraging there is that even though he failed, he said, Lord, save me.

And the Lord pulled him out of the water and carried him to the boat. And it wasn't the end of Peter when he failed. And it's not the end of us when we fail.

We have to cry out to the Lord too. But notice, it is possible. Now, you might say, Peter really was kind of out of line asking to walk on water like that.

I mean, that wasn't even practical. I mean, it's one thing to say, Lord, there's sick people who are giving the gift of healing. I mean, that's practical.

But to walk on water, there's nothing practical about that, except that he wanted to imitate Jesus. And when he sunk, Jesus didn't come down to Peter and say, Okay, Peter, you learned your lesson. Next time, stay in the boat.

He didn't say that. He didn't say, Peter, what are you trying to walk on the water for, you

goofball? He said, where's your faith? Why didn't you keep it up? Jesus was not displeased that Peter wanted to imitate Him. He was displeased that Peter didn't keep doing it.

But He saved him anyway. Now, walking as Jesus walked is what we do step by step, just like Peter when he's walking on the water. We do it out of obedience to Him.

He tells us to do it. Therefore, it must be something He'll enable us to do. But the fact that He'll enable us to do it doesn't make it automatic.

He enabled Peter to do it, but it wasn't automatic. Peter was capable of sinking still. And you are capable of stumbling still.

But you needn't necessarily. Let's talk about walking like this. First of all, as I said earlier, walking is a step by step thing.

Peter took a few steps successfully and stayed right on top of the water. You probably have taken a few steps now and then. And then, just like Jesus, did just the Christ-like thing.

Even in time when it wasn't very easy to do. You just were looking to the Lord and full of the Spirit. And He just kind of enabled you and you did the thing that was just like what Jesus would do.

But did you keep it up for 24 hours? Did you keep it up for 48? A year? Two years? I don't know. I haven't heard your answer, but I'm not going to embarrass you by asking you the answer. I think probably not.

I certainly can't say that I have. But that's because walking in the Spirit requires taking each step in the Spirit. And it's possible to take a thousand and one steps in the Spirit and a thousand and second step where our eyes are off the Lord.

We're not in the Spirit and we go down. In Romans, Paul refers to the faith of Abraham, which is, of course, the prototype of our faith, according to Scripture. And in Romans 4, verse 12, he made this statement.

That Abraham became the father of the circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but also who walk in the steps of the faith, which our father Abraham had while still in circumcision. Those who are Abraham's children are those who walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham. That is, individual steps, each step being a step of faith.

And as we walk, we take these steps. Sometimes we step in faith, sometimes I'm afraid to say we don't. Sorry to say.

But when we do, when we walk in the Spirit, that's a successful step. When we don't step by faith, when we're not walking and taking those steps in the way that the Bible says

we should, then we fall. Now, in Romans 8, where Paul talks about, you know, we walk in the Spirit and therefore we fulfill the righteous requirements of the law.

He also indicates there's a couple of things involved in walking in the Spirit that are analogous to walking, ordinary walking. When you walk, there's two things you need to be able to do. You need to have the power to actually stand up and move your legs and hold your weight and the energy to move forward.

That takes a certain amount of power. All of us in this room probably have that ability. There are people who don't.

There are people who are paralyzed. There's people who are weakened from sickness and they just can't get up. They don't have the power to walk.

And yet, we take it for granted. If we're in good health, we walk all the time. We don't think about, boy, I wonder if I have the power to take the next step.

I have, at one time, been to that place. I went hiking with some friends in the wilderness area, and I was out of shape, as I am now, and they were in shape. And they were cruising along pretty fast, carrying big, heavy packs.

And I didn't have much on my back, but I was pretty tired after about two and a half hours. Actually, it was more like on the way back. It was two and a half hours in and about two and a half hours back.

And it was uphill. And I was really tired, and I hadn't eaten anything. And I remember for the first time and only time I can remember in my life, I was so tired, I didn't think I could take one more step.

I mean, I knew I had to, because the end of the road was way up that hill, and I was cruising up the hill. Well, not cruising, oozing, more like. And I've never been so exhausted in my life.

I remember thinking, I can't lift my leg to take one more step. But I did. I thought, I can't do it.

And there were times I had to stop and just wait and rest. And finally, I ate something, and that made a big difference, because I hadn't eaten all day. But I never would have known.

I was never conscious before of the fact that walking takes energy. I do it all the time without being aware of it. But when you don't have it, you realize, hey, walking requires something.

I need power. I need strength. I need energy.

And to walk in the Spirit means that you walk, among other things, it means you walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables you and empowers you for this. We read of this in Romans 8.13. In Romans 8.13, Paul said, For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Putting to death the deeds of the body is Paul's way of saying you need to stop living according to the flesh. How is that going to be done? Well, through the Spirit. Not in your own power.

I myself serve the law of sin, but I don't have to be all by myself. I have the Spirit, and through the Spirit I can do things that I cannot do otherwise. Spiritual things.

I can overcome sin. I can walk as Jesus walked, because that's how He did it. He walked in the Spirit.

I can walk in the Spirit if He tells me to. If He gives me the Spirit, I can do that. And I can be empowered by the Spirit.

Remember it says in Philippians 2.13 that it's God who works in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure. How can I desire, or especially how can I perform the thing God wants me to do? Well, He works in me to do it. His power is there.

It's the power of the Holy Spirit that is spoken of there. And to walk anywhere, the first thing you need is the energy, the power to lift yourself and go. But there's something else you need to walk.

If you're going to walk from point A to point B, you have to know how to get there from here. You have to know where point B is. You've got to have either the ability to see it or some map or some kind of guidance system so you know where to make the turns and how to get to where you want to go.

So in order to successfully walk, you A, have to have the power. Secondly, you have to have some way of being guided. Otherwise, you're just wandering.

You're not walking. You're just meandering. To walk from here to somewhere else on a straight path, you need to know the next step to take.

You have to be guided. In most cases, we're guided by our eyes. If I want to leave this room, the door is right there.

I can see them. My eyes will guide me. When it comes to getting home, I can't see that from here, but I know the right places to turn.

I've memorized that. But if I was going somewhere I've never been, I have to look at a map and say, okay, where do I turn? I need guidance. Now, walking in the Spirit is to be

empowered by the Spirit and to be guided by the Spirit.

In Romans 8, in verse 14, Paul said, As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God. They're sons of God. So in the chapter where Paul says that we need to walk according to the Spirit, he says that we can do things by the Spirit, and we are led by the Spirit.

So walking in the Spirit involves receiving from the Holy Spirit the power, in the needed moment, to do what God wants us to do. And, of course, maybe even prior to that we need to know what it is He wants us to do. We have to have His guidance.

We have to know what it is He wants us to do next, what the next step is. Then we have to have the power to take that step. If we're walking in the Spirit, both of those things come from the Holy Spirit.

Now, I'm not talking necessarily about something really mystical, or something really Pentecostal, or something really sensational. But I do believe in the Pentecostal power. I do believe the power of the Holy Spirit is no less ours than it has been of any generation of Christians before.

I can't think of anything in the Bible, I've never seen anything in the Bible, that indicates that the first generation of Christians were supposed to have some kind of benefit for their Christian lives that the rest of the generations of Christians weren't supposed to have. And we do. And that brings us to how it is done.

How do I walk in the Spirit? Well, first of all, be filled with the Holy Spirit. Now, I'm not going to go into fine-tuned definitions of what it means to be filled with the Spirit. Of course, in Charismatic and Pentecostal circles, this would usually be called the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

I think that terminology is justified. The Bible uses that terminology in Acts 1-5. And it certainly is talking.

When Jesus said there, Jesus said, John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. This was fulfilled in Acts 2-4, where it says they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. So, being filled with the Spirit, there's no violence to the Scripture to call that being baptized in the Spirit.

Scripture uses those terms interchangeably in Acts. Also, the Bible calls that the Spirit coming upon you. Jesus said this to his disciples in Acts 1-8.

He said, you shall receive power. After that, the Holy Spirit has come upon you. When the Holy Spirit comes upon them, He's talking about the same thing that happened in Acts 2-4 when the Spirit filled them.

Now, I'm not one of those who pushes for any particular manifestation or any kind of a... I mean, I don't give altar calls about being filled with the Spirit and so forth, but I'd say this. Every Christian is commanded in Scripture to be filled with the Spirit. Paul said that in Ephesians 5-18.

He said, do not be drunk with wine, which is dissipation, but be filled with the Holy Spirit. Now, he wasn't telling these believers to get filled with the Holy Spirit. He was writing to Spirit-filled believers already.

We read in Ephesians 1 that he assumed his readers had the Holy Spirit and were sealed with the Spirit of promise and so forth. But, as he said it, it can be translated, be being filled with the Holy Spirit. On a regular basis, on an ongoing basis, be always being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Why? Because being filled with the Spirit is that which Jesus said would empower the disciples. You will receive power when the Spirit comes upon you. Now, what we need is power, and I'm not just talking about power to work miracles.

I haven't worked any miracles recently. I'm not talking about the power to have visions and dreams and prophecies. I believe in those things, by the way, but that's not what I'm referring to.

I'm not talking about the power to heal the sick or raise the dead, although I believe that that is biblical and I don't have any problem with it. But that's not what I'm referring to. I'm talking about the power to overcome carnality, the power to overcome the works of the flesh in my life.

That's the big miracle I need. I don't need to raise the dead every other day. In fact, I hardly ever run into dead people who need to be raised.

But I need to have death in my nature overcome. I need to have sin overcome in me. I need day by day, moment by moment.

That's the ongoing miracle I need, and that's what I cannot do in my own flesh. That's what I need power all the time for. And Jesus said you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.

Be filled with the Spirit, Paul said. Now, how does one be being filled with the Holy Spirit? There's a lot of things I could say that I won't turn to. They're not in the notes or anything.

But, I mean, Jesus said, for example, in John 7, 37-39, Jesus said, If anyone thirsts, let him come unto me. And he that believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. And John said this, he spoke of the Holy Spirit, who was not yet given because Christ was not yet glorified.

Now, he was speaking of the Holy Spirit when he said, out of your belly shall flow rivers of living water. That was the Holy Spirit he was referring to, according to John. That's John 7, 37-39.

But Jesus started that by saying, if anyone is thirsty, if a person is thirsty, let him come to me. And he that believes in me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. You must be thirsty for God.

You must have a desire. It must be more than just a slight interest. One must be truly desirous to follow the Lord and to be craving this victory, I think.

I mean, to take God casually is not what cuts it in the Christian life. You may already know this. You may have already been doing it.

In fact, you may not even be taking God casually and you're still having problems. You may be taking God seriously and you're still not holy. And you know, therefore, that a casual approach isn't going to cut the mustard.

Now, being thirsty for God is one thing. Jesus mentioned there are other things. But there's a few things I'd like to suggest that Paul suggested.

In Ephesians 5, that is where Paul actually says, be, being filled with the Holy Spirit. But he follows that up with some practical steps, I believe. Practical habits, really, that apparently are to enhance this fullness of the spirit that he advocates.

In Ephesians 5, I'll just start at verse 18 and read on. He says, do not be drunk with wine in which is dissipation, but be filled with the spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

Giving thanks always for all things to God, the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submitting to one another in the fear of God. Now, he says, be filled with the spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

Making melody in your hearts to the Lord. Giving thanks and everything to God the Father through Jesus Christ. And submitting to one another in the fear of God.

These things are part of what Paul talks about, be being filled with the spirit. How do you do it? Well, first of all, you're making melody to God in your heart. You're worshipping God.

You're singing and making melody in your heart, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. We try to mix those up a bit. I mean, here, when we sing, we try to have a little of all those.

But it means that in your heart, you're attuned to God in a way that inspires worship. That you keep your mind on God. You keep your heart tuned to the things of God.

And obviously, those things about Him that make you want to praise Him. There are people who think a lot about God, but every time they do, they've got hard feelings toward Him. Because He let something bad happen to them.

I think of Naomi in the Bible. How they said, oh, here comes Naomi. Her name meant pleasantness.

And she said, don't call me Naomi, call me Mara. Which means bitterness. She says, for the Lord has dealt bitterly with her.

She knew the Lord was in her circumstances, but she wasn't very happy about it. She wasn't praising God. But Paul indicates that an atmosphere of worship of God in the heart is a necessary part of being filled with the Spirit.

Start grumbling. Start having hard thoughts of God and others and so forth. It's likely to interfere with what Paul's saying has to be a continuous thing.

He says, giving thanks in everything. Now, it's hard to give thanks in everything, because not everything automatically makes us grateful. But again, the Scripture says that all things work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to His purpose.

So there should be nothing that could happen that would be impossible for us to thank God about. Even if the thing is not what we would have chosen or what we would have preferred or something we even like. If God is sovereign in our lives, and I believe the Bible teaches that He is, in our circumstances, nothing can happen to us but what God allows.

And if He is a loving Father and He allows something to happen to us, it might be painful to us, it might not be what we preferred, but it is from Him and we can embrace it and say, thank you, Father. Thank you for everything. Now see, what does this involve? This involves surrendering your way.

It's surrendering your agenda. If you've got your own agenda and God cuts into it and does something different what you want, you're not going to be very thankful. You need to give up your agenda and say, I accept your agenda, God, whatever you want.

I'll praise you for that. I'll thank you for that. And even submitting to one another.

Wouldn't you rather people submit to you? Wouldn't you rather people defer to you and let you have your way? But God says, no, you defer to them. That's how you'd be being filled with the Spirit. You give up your agendas.

You resign yourself to the providence of God in your life. You surrender yourself cheerfully to God, worshipfully, singing and making melody in your heart to God. If you

cannot surrender yourself fully and cheerfully to God, then your perception of God is deficient.

And you must think that He's a hard ruler and one that, you know, is not on your side. And in that case, you've got some basic foundations to relate in your knowledge of God. You need to know that God is loving God and that He is on your side.

We don't have time to go into all the scriptures that would teach that. But the point is, until you can surrender cheerfully to God so you can thank Him for everything He does and you can defer to everybody else, you know, and lay down your agendas and your will. In other words, if you're resigned to God and surrendered to Him, that is what Paul says is a part of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

And then, of course, there's the whole issue of just trusting God day by day. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5, 7, we walk. That's what we're talking about, isn't it? Walking.

We walk by faith. A walk in the Spirit is a walk by faith. That means we're not trusting that we can handle the situation, we're trusting that God can handle the situation.

It means that we can't see how any good thing will come out of this deal, but we trust that God can see what's going to come out of it. And He says it's going to work for our good. It means we can't see how we could resist this temptation, but we trust that God can resist it in us.

His Spirit is in us and He can do that. And it's a life of total childlike trust that's walking by faith. In Ephesians 6, 16, Paul said we have to take the shield of faith with which we can deflect all of the fiery darts of the wicked one.

All of them. If you meet every situation and every challenge that comes to you with faith, trusting God in that situation, trusting in the power of God, not in your own, the Scripture indicates that that will take care of everything. Every fiery dart will be quenched by that shield of faith, according to Ephesians 6, 16.

In 1 John 5, verse 4, it says, This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. We need to overcome the pull of the world and of sin and of the devil and the flesh. How is that done? It's by faith.

It's by trusting God. Now, trusting and surrendering. You surrender to the will of God, which means that you don't resist His guidance.

You don't resist the thing He's calling you to do next. The Word of God may tell you exactly what the next thing is to do, but it may not be what you want to do. But surrendering to His will, surrendering to His guidance, He will guide you if you are surrendered.

He won't bother if you're not. Jesus said, whoever is willing to do my Father's will, he will know of the teaching, whether it's God or not. God will let you know what His will is, if you are willing, if you're surrendered to it.

But you also have to not be surrendering, you have to be trusting that faithful is He who calls you, who also will do it. He's also the one who is able to do abundantly above all that we ask or think. If He's calling you to be Christ-like in a situation that you can't imagine yourself being Christ-like, increase your imagination.

If you can't imagine being Christ-like, imagine Jesus being Christ-like. That's not hard to imagine. And yet His Spirit is in you, and that's who made Him behave that way.

That's who can assist you to behave that way. You need to believe that God has given a command. With that command comes the enablement to do what it requires.

God does not ever give commands that He's not willing to enable you to do. But you grab that with faith. You trust Him.

You say, OK, God, You said it. I don't think I can do it, but I think You can do it. I'll do what You said.

You do it in me. It's God who works in me to will and to do of His good pleasure, and that's why I have to trust that it is. What does it look like when you walk in the Spirit? Well, there are several things I've given in the note.

One of them is that you walk in the fear of the Lord. In Isaiah 11-2, which we read a moment ago about the Messiah, it says, The Spirit of the Lord will be upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge, etc., etc., and the Spirit of the fear of the Lord. The Spirit that we walk in is the Spirit of the fear of the Lord, among other things.

And that means we walk in the fear of the Lord. What is the fear of the Lord? It doesn't mean we're afraid of God. The Bible doesn't mean that when it talks about the fear of the Lord.

It doesn't mean I'm walking around terrified of God. But it means I'm smart enough to know that I should be if I'm not on His side. And that's an important foundational thing.

That's the beginning of wisdom. It says in Proverbs, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And no one is smart if they haven't come to these terms that to be against God is a scary position to be in.

I'm not afraid of freight trains. But I'm afraid of getting on the railroad tracks on a bicycle and riding directly into an oncoming freight train. The reason is because I don't belong there.

I don't belong in that relationship with a freight train. I'm happy to be on a train. I've

ridden on Amtrak before.

It doesn't scare me at all. That's a lot of power surging down those tracks, but I'm surging right with it. I'm sitting there moving in the same direction at the same speed.

No problem. If I'm going the opposite direction on the same track, coming toward it, that's a problem. That scares me.

But I don't plan to do that. The prospect scares me, so I don't do it. And therefore, I'm not afraid of it.

I can't remember ever being afraid of a train because I've never... Well, because I am afraid of trains. I'm not afraid of them because I'm afraid of them. Because I fear being wrongly related to a train, I don't do those things that put me in a wrong relationship with a train, and therefore, I don't spend any time fearing them.

Likewise, to fear the Lord is to be awesomely terrified of the prospect of being wrongly related to a holy and mighty God who punishes iniquity. And yet, to be rightly related with Him removes the sensation of fear altogether. Now, fear of the Lord is not just an Old Testament concept.

We're told in 1 Peter 1.17, if you call on the Father who without respect to persons judges according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. We're told to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear. It says in the book of Proverbs, Be in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

We are walking in the fear of the Lord. That expression is used in Nehemiah 5.9. Ought we not to walk in the fear of the Lord our God? Nehemiah said. There's a lot of things in Scripture about the fear of the Lord.

But one thing is very clear, that sanctification and holy living doesn't happen where the fear of the Lord is absent. In 2 Corinthians 7.1, Paul said, Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, spiritual wickedness and fleshly wickedness, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Interesting, he tells us to do that.

Some people think that's God's the only one who does that kind of stuff. Look, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves. Well, does that mean I'm going to sanctify myself? Not alone, it's because I have these promises from God.

If God promises, it's possible to do it. Can I cleanse myself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit? No. If God promises that I can, yes, then I can.

If God says it, then it can happen. That's what it says. Now, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Obviously, to walk in the Spirit, to become holy, to become sanctified requires that I walk in the fear of the Lord. And that can be done. Needs to be done.

When you are sinning, you are not fearing God. It's either because you've forgotten that God is there, or you're not aware that He said something against that, or you think He's just a big old cuddly God who doesn't care too much about that kind of stuff. But in any case, you are not thinking about God biblically.

God's not a big cuddly God who doesn't care much about that stuff. God cares a great deal about sin, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. He struck people dead instantly in some cases when they sinned.

They'd have an abihu in the Old Testament, in Leviticus chapter 10, and Ananias and Sapphira in the New Testament, Acts 5. He doesn't do that all the time. But that's not uncharacteristic behavior on his part. He does that so that we will know what he thinks about that kind of thing.

Sin bothers God, and it ought to bother you to think in terms of sin. When you are tempted to do one thing, but you know God wants you to do another, let the fear of the Lord be present, and walk in that fear. It makes a great big deal of difference.

It says in Proverbs 8.13, it says, The fear of the Lord is to hate evil. And in Proverbs 16.6, I think that's where it says, By the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil. So, you walk in the Spirit, you walk in the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, you're walking in the fear of the Lord.

You'll be departing from evil. Make a big difference in the way you walk. Walking in the Spirit is, among other things, walking in the fear of the Lord.

And that includes walking humbly. You know, remember Micah 6.8? To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly. Humility comes from the fear of the Lord.

In fact, it's very closely tied together. God said in Isaiah 66.2, He says, To this man will I look, to him that is of a humble and a contrite spirit, who trembles at my word. Trembling at God's word.

There's a lot of indifference about God's word in the church of God today. And there's a lot of sin too, not surprisingly. I think there's a connection.

Those who tremble at His word and who are of a humble and contrite spirit are the same people. The Bible says in Proverbs, By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, honor, and something else. Proverbs 22.4 Humility and the fear of the Lord.

These two go together. If you fear God, you will not allow yourself to get too proud. Because the fear of the Lord is to hate pride and arrogance and evil.

So, humility and the fear of the Lord are part of walking in the Spirit. The second thing that's part of it is walking in wisdom. Why? Because Isaiah 11.2 says He's the Spirit of wisdom and understanding.

If you walk in the Spirit, you'll be walking in wisdom. We're commanded in Colossians 4.5 to walk in wisdom toward those who are outside the church. That's part of our walk in the Spirit, that we walk in wisdom.

The Holy Spirit does not lead you to do stupid things. He might lead you to do things that don't seem very smart from the standpoint of unbelievers. But everything God would ever have you to do makes perfectly good sense from the standpoint of God's worldview.

Of the prior things that we know about God. I mean, when Jim Elliott said, He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep in order to obtain that which he cannot lose. He was speaking in a higher wisdom than the world could understand.

But he was speaking from a biblical worldview. There are things you can't lose. Eternal spiritual things.

There are things you can't keep. Your earthly life. You're not a fool if you give up the one you can't keep to get what you can't lose.

That's what he said. But I'll tell you, the world doesn't see it that way. The wisdom of God is foolishness to man.

But the fact is, it is wisdom nonetheless. I mean, from the right premises, the biblical premises, everything God expects you to do, even laying down your life, is wise. Makes sense.

And the Holy Spirit will always lead us to walk in the wisdom of God. In Ephesians chapter 5, verses 15 through 17, Paul said, See then that you walk circumspectly. That means looking around carefully.

Not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. You walk not as fools.

You walk as wise. You walk in wisdom because that's what walking in the Spirit will require. He's a spirit of wisdom.

You walk in wisdom when you walk in the Spirit. Now, what is wisdom? Well, Jesus made it easy. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew chapter 7, verse 24 and following, Jesus said, He that hears these sayings of mine and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on a rock.

But he that hears these sayings of mine and doesn't do them, I'll liken him to a foolish man who built his house on sand. So that makes it easy. What's wisdom? Well, look what

Jesus said.

Look at his sayings. What did Jesus say in the Sermon on the Mount? That's what he's summarizing in that parable. He said, all these sayings of mine in this sermon.

You do those things, you're wise. You don't do those things, you're not very wise. So, walking in wisdom really amounts to walking according to what Jesus said.

Walking in obedience to Him. When you've got a choice to make, a step to take, there's something Jesus said, it's very clear what He wants you to do. There's something else you're more tempted to do.

Step in wisdom. Walk in wisdom. Do the thing that Jesus said.

That's always wiser. Maybe a little harder at times, but He will enable you if you take that step, trusting Him to enable you, He will help you to do the thing that is wise instead of the thing that's foolish. That's what walking in the Spirit amounts to.

What else? Walking in the Spirit is walking in love, because the fruit of the Spirit is love, according to Galatians 5.22. Therefore, Paul says in Ephesians 5.2, he says, and walk in love as Christ also has loved us. We're supposed to walk even as He walked. He has loved us, so we need to walk in love too.

That means that when I'm trying to decide what step to take next, how do I walk in the Spirit? What step does He want me to take? Well, if one thing is the loving thing, and the other is the selfish thing, there's no question about it. The loving thing is the thing that the Spirit will have you do. That's the fruit of the Spirit, is love.

It really gets quite easy when you think about it. I mean, walking in the Spirit isn't some big mysterious thing. It means you walk in the fear of the Lord.

It means you walk in obedience to Christ and wisdom. It means you walk in love. What else? You also walk in the light.

According to 1 John 1, 6-10, John said, and this is the message, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.

And they said this, If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His truth is not in us.

His word is not in us. Now, it says, walk in the light. God is light.

If you are going to fellowship with Him, you have to be where He is. He is in the light. There is no darkness in Him at all.

So if you walk in darkness, you are not fellowshiping with Him. But if you walk in the light, there is fellowship with Him. And cleansing too.

What does it mean to walk in the light? Well, He illustrates it this way. Well, do you confess that you are a sinner or do you not? Do you live a transparent life or do you claim that you did not do anything wrong? If we confess our sins, that is walking in the light. If we say we have no sin, that is not walking in the light.

That is hiding. That is concealing the truth about ourselves. Now, there are things about ourselves that are simply not wise or advisable to expose everyone to.

There are secrets that you and God have that simply would never be tasteful or right to expose others to. But at the same time, walking in the light certainly does mean that you fess up to the unflattering truth. That you are a sinner and that you need cleansing.

But you also walk in the light that God gives you. God gives you light through the teaching of Jesus. Jesus said, I am the light of the world.

He that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. John 8.12 So, this is what walking in the spirit looks like. It looks like walking in the fear of God, which is also walking humbly with your God.

It looks like walking wisely, walking in wisdom, which looks like obeying Jesus. It means walking in love. And it means walking in the light.

It means being transparent. It means being ready to confess your faults readily. That's what it looks like.

Now, the one thing that we need, probably more than most other things to walk with God, is perseverance. Because we do the right thing sometimes. I bet everyone in this room does the right thing sometimes.

In fact, I would dare say that some of you do the right thing most of the time. I'm willing to suggest that. I don't know all of you, but I would guess, knowing some of you have been Christians a long time, probably most of you do the right thing most of the time.

But probably all of you do the wrong thing sometimes. And you don't persevere walking in the spirit. You see, you can walk in the spirit for an hour, and in the next minute, not walk in the spirit, you take a wrong step.

You don't walk in love. You don't walk humbly. You don't walk in the light.

You don't do what Jesus said. You don't fear God, as you should. These things need to be

the constant frame of reference for everything that you are exposed to and that you confront.

I'm confronting my world, living in the fear of the Lord all the day long, passing the time of my sojourning here in fear and humility and in love and in obedience and wisdom. These are the things that if I walk in these things, that is what the Holy Spirit himself enables me to do. If I step out of the lines of wisdom or of obedience or of love or of humility, he doesn't enable me.

He doesn't help me. It's he and I together. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

He works in you. You've got to take the steps. He makes you want it, and he will help you do it.

But you have to work it out. You have to do the outward steps. You have to take the actual step.

You have to make the actual decision, moment by moment, step by step, decision by decision. In each case you say, OK, I have an opportunity here to remain in the Spirit or to get out of the Spirit. I have an opportunity here to take a step in the Spirit or to take a step in the flesh.

If I take a step in the flesh, I'm just going to regret it later and not bring glory to God. Developing Christian character requires this, that we become more persevering in walking in the Spirit. If there's something you do frequently that's in the flesh, you don't need to just hammer on that one thing.

You just need to walk in the Spirit. Because if you walk in the Spirit, you won't fulfill the lust of the flesh. Walking in the Spirit is the one art and skill that you need to learn.

And it's really not all that hard. A child can learn it. A child can do it.

But mature Christians should be doing it better than children do. But we only get better at it if we persevere in it. And so perseverance is very important.

The Greek word for perseverance in Scripture is *hupomone*, which means abiding under. It means endurance or perseverance. And it's the quality that does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial.

There's quite a bit in the Scripture advocating this perseverance. In Luke chapter 8 in the parable of the sower and the seeds, that seed which produced good fruit was that which did so with perseverance, it says in Luke 8, 15. Produced good fruit with perseverance.

Those who had a good and perfect heart. There's many references to the need for perseverance. And there's even quite a few places in the Scripture that says trials and

sufferings work perseverance in us.

I have given you some of the notes, some of the references in your notes. I won't look at all those with you right now. But we need to walk in the Spirit and we need to persevere in it.

And as we do that, we will find that we are walking the way Jesus walked. Because He walked in the Spirit. And we are commanded and required to walk as He walked.

And that would not be a requirement if it was not something that could be done. So I don't believe any of us do it perfectly. But it seems like we should be getting better at it.

I still don't walk physically perfectly. Once in a while I twist my ankle or trip over something. But I don't fall and trip and stumble as much as when I was a little kid.

And generally speaking, I walk without stumbling. And spiritually we should be able to do the same thing, generally speaking. And like Peter, when we take our eyes off of Jesus and our faith is not in Him, we take a step that doesn't... the water's kind of liquidy, you know.

And it doesn't hold us up anymore. But of course, like Peter, he cried out to Jesus and said, Lord, save me. He was pulled back up, put back in the boat.

We don't read of him trying it again. But I believe that that wasn't the last time he could have done it had the Lord wanted him to. And had he been willing.

And if we're willing, we can walk as Jesus walked, just as Peter desired to do. And as we are commanded. We will end...