

Week 10: The Spirit And The Contemporary Church

The church accomplishes its mission only by relying on Spirit empowerment.

The events of Acts 2 teach us that the Spirit provides power for witness, opens doors for witness, brings conviction through God's Word in witness, and incorporates new believers into the church as the result of witness. If the church's mission is to reach the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ—*and it is*—Holy Spirit empowerment is indispensable to that mission.

It does not matter how old our churches are. It does not matter how large our churches are. It does not matter how good our churches' staffs, programs, or strategies are. Only if the Spirit empowers our efforts will they be truly effective in what really matters: transforming lives for God's kingdom.

John D. Harvey,
*Anointed with the Spirit and Power: The
Holy Spirit's Empowering Presence*

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The work of the Spirit according to the Apostle Paul

1. Set Free by the Spirit (Romans 8:1–30)
2. Taught by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 1:18–2:16)
3. Gifted by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:1–11)
4. Transformed by the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:1–18)
5. Led by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16–26)
6. Filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:15–21)

Set Free by the Spirit (Romans 8:1-30)

Romans 8:1-8

¹There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

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- **No Condemnation:** Paul opens with the foundational promise that those who are united with Christ Jesus face "now no condemnation." What the Old Testament Law could not do because it was weakened by human flesh, God accomplished by sending Jesus to condemn sin.
- **Indwelling Power:** Believers are no longer controlled by the flesh because the Holy Spirit lives inside them. Furthermore, the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead will ultimately give eternal life to their mortal bodies.

Romans 8:15-17

¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

- **Sons and Heirs:** Believers are under no obligation to obey the flesh. Those who are led by the Spirit are recognized as the children (sons and daughters) of God.

Romans 8:18

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Romans 8:25-28

²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit

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himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:1-30 guides the believer from an initial assurance of **no condemnation** through a transformative path of adoption, spiritual development, and perseverance in the face of trials, ultimately culminating in the certain outcome of **eternal glorification**.

Taught by the Spirit

1 Corinthians 1:18-19

*¹⁸ For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written,
“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”*

- **The cross is folly to unbelievers:** God deliberately destroys the wisdom of the wise and frustrates the intelligence of the clever. The world, through its own philosophical wisdom, failed to know God.

- **Signs and ‘wisdom’:** Jewish people demand miraculous signs, and Greeks look for sophisticated wisdom or philosophy. However, Paul preaches "Christ crucified," which is a stumbling block to Jews and utter foolishness to Gentiles.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29

²⁶ For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were

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powerful, not many were of noble birth.

²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

- **Shaming the strong:** God intentionally chose what the world considers foolish, weak, lowly, and despised to shame the wise and the strong. He did this so that no human being could ever boast in His presence.

You can easily see why the cross is the end of the line for human pride. Picture a well-respected American businessman, a banker, lawyer, doctor, well dressed, well groomed, being taken out the gate of the city to the garbage dump and being stood in front of a post with a naked man hanging by the nails driven through his wrists, covered with blood, gasping for his last breaths, and being told, "This, sir, is wisdom and righteousness and holiness and redemption. Will you kneel down here and cast yourself on him for mercy?"

John Piper, *Let Him Who Boasts Boast in the Lord!*

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

¹ And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him

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crucified. ³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, ⁴ and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

1 Corinthians 2:9-10

⁹ But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him” —

¹⁰ these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

1 Corinthians 2:14-16

¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. ¹⁶ “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

- **Revealed by the Spirit:** This divine reality cannot be perceived by human senses (eye has not seen, ear has not heard). It is revealed to believers exclusively through the Holy Spirit, who searches the deep things of God.
- **The spiritual person:** A person without the Spirit (the natural person) cannot accept or understand the things of God because they are spiritually discerned.
- **A new worldview:** The mind of Christ allows you to understand spiritual

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realities and truth, distinguishing them from the wisdom of the world

Gifted by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:1-11)

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

¹ Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. ³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

- **Moving past ignorance:** Paul reminds believers of their pagan past when they were influenced and led astray by speechless idols.

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- **Giving of gifts:** There are varieties of **gifts**, but the same **Spirit**; varieties of **service**, but the same **Lord** (Jesus); varieties of **activities**, but it is the same **God** who empowers them all in everyone.
- **For the common good:** Paul explicitly states that a manifestation of the Spirit is given to each individual believer not for personal status or boasting, but for the profit and benefit of the entire community.

Spiritual gifts

1. **Utterance of wisdom** (Spiritual insight or practical wisdom)
2. **Utterance of knowledge** (Deep understanding of spiritual truths)
3. **Faith** (Supernatural, mountain-moving trust in God)
4. **Gifts of healing** (Supernatural restoration of physical health)
5. **Working of miracles** (Acts of divine power)
6. **Prophecy** (Proclaiming a timely, inspired message from God)
7. **Ability to distinguish between spirits** (Discernment of spiritual sources)
8. **Various kinds of tongues** (Speaking in unlearned languages)
9. **Interpretation of tongues** (Translating those languages for the church)

Transformed by the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:1-18)

2 Corinthians 3:7-18

⁷Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, ⁸will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? ⁹For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far

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exceed it in glory. ¹⁰ Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. ¹¹ For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.

¹² Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ¹³ not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. ¹⁴ But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶ But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

- **The fading glory of the law:** Paul acknowledges that the Old Covenant ministry (carved in stone) had real glory—so much so that the Israelites couldn't gaze at Moses' face because of its brightness. However, that ministry ultimately brought condemnation and death, and its glory was temporary and fading.

- **The permanent glory of righteousness:** If a ministry that brought death had glory, the ministry of the Spirit that brings righteousness and life must be infinitely more glorious. The glory of the New Covenant is so overwhelming that it completely eclipses the Old, and unlike the Old, it is permanent.

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- **Freedom and transformation:** Paul concludes with a powerful definition of the Spirit's work: *"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."*
- **From glory to glory:** Because the veil has been removed, all believers can look upon the glory of the Lord with an uncovered face. As they look at Him, they are actively being transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory ("from glory to glory"), a work that comes directly from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Led by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-26)

Galatians 5:16-21

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

- **Walking by the Spirit:** Paul begins with a definitive command and promise: if a believer chooses to actively "walk by the Spirit," they will absolutely not gratify the desires of the flesh.
- **The spiritual war:** He describes a constant, internal tug-of-war. The desires of the flesh are entirely opposed to the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are opposed to the flesh. These two forces are in direct conflict, paralyzing the

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individual and preventing them from simply doing whatever they want.

- **Freedom from the law:** Paul notes that if a believer is actively led by the Spirit, they are no longer bound or condemned under the constraints of the Mosaic Law.
- **Evident behaviors:** Paul lists the outward behaviors that naturally result from being ruled by one's sinful human nature. He categorizes these "works of the flesh" into several areas:
 - **Sexual sins:** Sexual immorality, impurity, and sensuality.
 - **Spiritual sins:** Idolatry and sorcery (occult practices).
 - **Relational sins:** Enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, and envy.
 - **Intemperance sins:** Drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

A serious warning: Paul reiterates a stern warning he gave them previously: those who make a continuous, unrepentant practice of living this way will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5:22-26

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

- **A singular fruit:** In stark contrast to the chaotic "works" of the flesh, Paul presents the harmonious "fruit" that the Holy Spirit naturally produces in a

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believer's life. This fruit is manifested in nine specific virtues:

- Love (agape) - selfless, unconditional love
- Joy - deep gladness and delight in God
- Peace - inner tranquility and harmony
- Patience (longsuffering) - endurance and forbearance with others
- Kindness (gentleness) - goodness and compassion toward others
- Goodness - moral excellence and integrity
- Faithfulness - reliability, loyalty, and trustworthiness
- Gentleness (meekness) - humility and strength under control
- Self-control - discipline and mastery over one's desires

- **Beyond the law:** Paul dryly notes that "against such things there is no law." The Law exists to restrain bad behavior, but it has no restrictions or penalties for these godly virtues.

- **Crucifying the flesh:** Those who truly belong to Christ Jesus have decisively "crucified the flesh" along with its passions and desires, breaking its absolute power over their lives.

- **Keeping in step:** Paul concludes with a practical call to action: since the Holy Spirit has given believers new life, they must actively keep in step with the Spirit day by day. This means setting aside conceit, interpersonal provocation, and mutual envy.

Galatians 5:16–26 demonstrates that the Christian life is not about trying harder to follow external rules. Instead, it is about **surrendering to the Holy Spirit's internal guidance, which naturally starves the destructive desires of the flesh and yields** a unified harvest of Christlike character.

Filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:15-21)

Ephesians 5:15-21

¹⁵ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

- **Intentional living:** Paul commands believers to be highly intentional about how they live—admonishing them to walk not as unwise people, but as wise.
- **Making the most of time:** He instructs them to "redeem the time" (make the best use of every opportunity) specifically because "the days are evil."
- **Understanding God's will:** Rather than being foolish or thoughtless, Christians are called to actively understand and align their lives with the Lord's will.
- **The contrast:** Paul draws a famous parallel: *"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit."*
- **Under the influence:** Just as alcohol controls a person's behavior, actions, and speech from the inside out, the believer is instead to be continuously under the control, influence, and empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

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Paul lists four distinct corporate and personal signs that demonstrate a person (and a church community) is truly filled with the Spirit:

- **Joyful community (Speaking):** Believers address one another in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."
- **Inward worship (Singing):** They sing and make melody to the Lord with all their heart.
- **Constant gratitude (Giving thanks):** They give thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- **Mutual submission (Submitting):** They submit to one another out of a deep reverence and fear of Christ, prioritizing the needs of others above their own.

Ephesians 5:15–21 shows that being filled with the Holy Spirit is not an emotional, isolated experience. Instead, it is a daily, intentional choice to let God control your life, resulting in **wisdom, genuine worship, unceasing gratitude, and a harmonious relationship with others.**