

The Spirit of God Pt3

by Ralph Shallis

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being filled with the Spirit as a normal Christian life, and explores the seven progressive acts of the Spirit that result from this fullness.

Duration: 1:04:10

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:2, 1 Corinthians 3:1, Ephesians 4:14, Hebrews 5:11, James 4:6, 1 Peter 2:2

Topics: "Spirit Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the Corinthians, a church that has failed to mature spiritually. The apostle Paul writes to them with a broken heart, expressing his disappointment that they are still behaving like carnal and immature believers. He compares their spiritual growth to infants who can only handle milk instead of solid food. The speaker emphasizes the need for God's grace and the teaching of the Holy Spirit to help believers endure future challenges and sufferings. The sermon also references the story of Elijah being sustained by God's provision of bread for forty days and nights, highlighting the importance of relying on God's strength in difficult times.

Transcript

In the background on this recording, you may be able to hear other voices and this is because there were people present from several nations and their friends were giving simultaneous translation to them because of language problems. Father, I confess that I am just a poor sinner that you have saved and that I need your grace and that we all need your grace this morning in order to obtain your blessing. Oh God, we simply cast ourselves upon your mercy.

Only your spirit can open our eyes. Only Christ can change our hearts. Only you, only your word can nourish our souls and we look to you.

Realizing our need, not knowing what needs we may have in the days to come, not knowing how one day we may have to answer perhaps our jailers or our torturers, not knowing how we shall be able to endure some of the things we may be called upon to suffer. Today we need the abundance of your grace. We need the teaching of your Holy Spirit.

We pray that this morning you will keep us from anything which is contrary to your Holy Word and that your Holy Spirit may write in our hearts the very truth of Christ. Father, give us our daily bread. Give us the spiritual strength that we need for today and for the days to come.

And we pray that as you gave Elijah the bread which enabled him to walk for forty days and nights to Horeb, the Mount of God, where he met you face to face, so we pray that this meat that we receive from you this morning may enable us to walk in the strength of God to the very Mount of God in these days to come. We pray that you will grant each of us a really deep, overwhelming personal revelation and experience of yourself. Father, we know that nothing else is worth living for except this and the communicating of it to the lost world in which we live.

We ask these things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Look with me, if you will, at the first epistle to the Corinthians and chapter 3, the first verse.

The whole epistle to the Corinthians is a very sad epistle. I feel that Paul wrote all these words with a broken heart. He was writing to a church that had really failed to grow up.

They were still carnal, they were still babes in Christ. He says, I, brethren, couldn't address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, carnal men, as babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it, and even now, even yet, you are not ready for it, for you are still of the flesh, while there is jealousy and strife among you.

For one says, I belong to Paul, and another, I belong to Apollos. And aren't you merely acting as men? I'm quite sure that if there's any spirit of strife or emulation or sectarianism, denominationalism, doctrinal conflict among us this morning as we study this subject, we can classify ourselves immediately as a bunch of carnal Christians. And this was what broke Paul's heart after pouring out so much of his life for these churches.

We sense in nearly all the letters he wrote a very deep pathos as he laboured in prayer, suffered in prison for these people in order to bring them to the full stature of Christ until Christ should be formed in them. Paul makes it quite clear that there are two kinds of Christian, spiritual and carnal. We are not called upon to judge our brother and decide whether he is carnal or spiritual, but we have to judge ourselves constantly and see whether we are walking spiritually or carnally.

There is one other passage I want to read in Hebrews 5, at the end of Hebrews 5, in verse 11. After the unknown writer of this epistle to the Hebrews has got right into his subject of Christ, he says in verse 11 about this, We have much to say which is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of God's word.

You need milk and not solid food. For everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, the grown-ups, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.

Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrines of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and faith towards God, with instructions about ablutions, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits. I think that many of us ought to be teachers, and many of us are still babies having to receive our daily ration of food from somebody else, and worse still, having to have it in bottle form.

There is nothing more pathetic than a Christian who should be mature, who is still feeding on his bottle. I can't help feeling that in most of our western churches, the average Christian who comes to church

Sunday by Sunday is just coming for his weekly bottle. It's so pathetic and so sad when so many of these people could be real teachers of the word, real preachers, real soul winners, even begetting their own little churches in their own houses, as we find in the New Testament times, Paul writing to one epistle after another says, greet the church that is in thy house, greet the church that is in their house, the church that is in the house of so and so salutes you.

Where are those churches today? Well, may God enable us to create a whole new kind of Christianity in the days to come. I believe our year with OM will be valuable training for that. Now, there are four commandments in the Bible concerning the Holy Spirit, and only four.

In all my life I have never found another one. A vast amount of teaching, but only four commandments. And I believe that if we can understand these four commandments, and with God's help obey them, we can really expect the Spirit of God to fulfill the purpose of God in our life.

I shan't have time to go into this, except very superficially this morning. I want to look at the first commandment first, then I want to deal with the sevenfold progressive work of the Spirit, which is the logical sequence, and then, if I have time, I want to deal with the three other commandments at the end of our session. The first commandment I find in Ephesians 5.18. Be filled with the Spirit.

The fullness of the Spirit is not a spiritual luxury reserved for certain Christians, but it is something which is an obligation on all believers. We are all commanded to be filled with the Spirit, and if we are not filled with the Spirit, we are sinning. We have been used to such a poor kind of Christianity for a generation or two now, that we have come to consider the fullness of the Spirit as something quite exceptional, something which isn't within the reach of all Christians.

But the New Testament makes it abundantly clear that this is the normal Christian life, and anything else is abnormal. I want to look at this verse with you for a few moments, and I will just add that here we have what I believe is the seventh initial act of the Spirit of God when he saves us. Nearly always when we are saved, when we do find Christ, we are filled with the Spirit.

Perhaps not to the nth degree, but I think most of us, looking back to the day or the night when we found the Lord, we remember that time as a time of glory and blessing, joy and deliverance. We found the Lord. We had a whole new light in our soul.

We had a wonderful witness of the Spirit of God in our hearts. We were filled with love. We were filled with joy.

Most of us found it necessary to witness to other people. We couldn't keep it for ourselves. And nearly all of us found a real victory over many sins in our life which had beset us up till that time.

For most of us it was a wonderful experience. According to the New Testament, this experience should be merely the beginning of a continuous developing experience in our life. We are not meant to lose that first love, that first glory.

It is meant to develop. The next day it is meant to develop further. The third day it is meant to be even more developed.

And it's meant to continue thus until the time when we lay down this earthly body ready to meet our Lord face to face in the world to come. But we've been used to a kind of Christianity that is lived on a low

spiritual level. We've been more or less told that because we're in the flesh and we're in this world we're all very imperfect and we've just got to jog along crawling on hands and knees most of the time with just a little uplift sometimes and hearing occasionally of some men and women who seem to be living altogether in another dimension and we look upon them as supermen, superwomen until one day we realize, perhaps through studying the Bible or meeting someone who has discovered the truth of these things that we're just living right out of the will of God.

We begin to seek God. We begin to seek a completely new experience of God. Sometimes it takes us a long time to get there.

Sometimes God will test us out for months or even years before he will give us again what we lost at our conversion. But other times God will meet us much more rapidly. To some of us it comes like the springing of the dawn or like the slow budding of all the spring flowers and trees.

To others of us it comes like a clap of thunder and a flash of lightning that seems to split the universe in half. God manifests himself to each one of us in a way that is always unique and this is why we must not make the mistake of copying certain men of God, copying other people's experiences. The only one whom we can copy is Christ.

We can take the example of the apostles, of the men and women of God down through history as a stimulus to us and as illustrations of many aspects of the experience of God. But we do not model our life on these men and women. We model our life on Christ and we realize that God has given us each a unique personality and he wants to reveal himself to each one of us in a unique way.

God doesn't make men on a mass-produced production line. Each one of us has a precious, unique conception that God has had, something which is meant to reflect Christ in a way totally different from anybody else. This is what makes the richness and the marvelous variety of the true Church of Christ.

In glory, in heaven, all the transformed personalities of all the people of God, of all history, will be there as a multiple reflection in innumerable facets of light of the glory that is Christ. But if we haven't been used to living on this level, when it comes to us it does very often seem like a second conversion or something else. And this is why some people call it by one name and some people call it by another.

But the apostle Paul, in three days from meeting Jesus Christ, once he was fully committed to him on that third day and received the Spirit of God, he just went straight up. He didn't go up and down and jog along for several years. His life was just a straight upward path to glory.

He certainly had a few failures, just a few ups and downs here and there, but in the whole his life was just one straight upward trend. This is the normal Christian life. This is what we are meant to be.

But if we've been living on a low level with little ups and downs for several years and then suddenly we realize what God has for us, we suddenly zoom up and we're astonished at the experience. But really we should be going right up from the day of our new birth. There are, generally speaking, two conceptions of this wonderful fullness of the Spirit of God.

And these two conceptions are really based on two different conceptions of what the human soul is. Some people seem to think that the human soul is like a bottle, a champagne bottle, and if only God can fill it up, well, that's it, we've got it. And if we like, we can cork it up, we can put it in our cellar, or we can drink it if we like, and we can put the label on it and we say, I had it in 1954 or 1908.

And there it is, and you can't do any more about it. You've got it, but that's the end of it. But all too often when we have thought that we've been able to get God to fill our soul, to fill our bottle, and we've duly labeled it and perhaps corked it up, we find when we come to drink it and to use it that somehow there isn't anything there.

In fact, our human soul is not like a bottle. A bottle has an opening only one end, upward. But the human soul is like a riverbed, or like a pipe, or like an electric wire.

It's open both ends. It can only be full as a current is passing through it. A riverbed can only be full of water as it receives from the mountain the pure snows melted down into water, and as it gives it all out down into the plain below or into the sea.

The only way that we can be filled with the Spirit of God is if God is continuously causing the Spirit of God to pass through us, if we are receiving the Spirit of God all the time and passing him out, giving him out all the time around us. Don't you think it's almost sacrilegious to suppose that you can have God and contain him within a bottle like a human soul and reckon that you've got him, really got him, got it all? Who can contain God? Even the universe can't contain God. I know from my experience that I can only be full of God, full of the Spirit of God, if at both ends, Godward and manward, everything is unblocked and the Spirit of God can just go right through me.

If I cease to receive, if I neglect my quiet times, or if my conscience isn't right with God or I'm disobedient, or if I am not giving something out to my fellow men all the time, if I'm not living for others, it's all gone. There's a wonderful example of this in the Holy Land itself, in Palestine, the Land of Israel. There are two great lakes in Israel, the Lake of Galilee and the Dead Sea.

And this really is a wonderful parable of the truth that we've just been talking about. The Lake of Galilee is living and fresh, full of fish, and around its shores there is or can be an abundant life. The Lake of Galilee receives its water direct from the snows of Hermon, without any other intermediary.

And it gives out all the water that it receives into the lower Jordan Valley. The Dead Sea receives exactly the same water, but it doesn't get it direct from the mountain, it gets it from the Lake of Galilee. And instead of giving out what it receives, it keeps all of it.

But because it is on such a low level below the sea, the water itself evaporates and all that is left is the bitterness and the deadness. And I feel that this is a picture of the two kinds of Christian. The spiritual Christian is the man who is at the foot of the Mount of God, and is receiving all the time from God's eternal snows, the water of life, the Spirit of God.

And he is full of pure living water, but he is giving out everything that he receives. He is living it out at the same time. He is receiving and giving without ceasing.

The carnal Christian is the man who is not closely in contact with God, and he gets his spiritual life from other people, from his church, or from a team leader, or from some man or woman. He comes like a baby just to suck the bottle. And he is not giving anything at all.

And the result is that the water itself, the Holy Spirit, just evaporates, because he is on such a low level. And all that is left is just the bitterness, the deadness, the salt. Now Paul says, Be filled with the Spirit.

There are one or two things I'd like to see in this verse with you. He says, Don't get drunk with wine. Don't get drunk with anything which leaves a hangover.

We don't need any kind of artificial stimulus in order to do the work of God. The Church of God today is relying on all sorts of things, organization, administration, propaganda, technique, money, all kinds of things, instead of relying on the Spirit of God. And all these things leave a horrible spiritual hangover.

Alcohol, drugs, all these things give you a momentary kick, and you think you're there, you think you're really doing the job. But when the effect is all over, you just find that you're on a lower level than ever before. Well, Paul says we are to repudiate anything which is an artificial stimulant for our spiritual life.

And we are to seek what comes from God alone, the Spirit of God. But there is an analogy between drunkenness and the fullness of the Spirit. A man who is drunk has an incredible nerve.

He'll knock off any policeman's helmet for him without being asked. And he is often so happy that he'll walk down the middle of the street singing at the top of his voice. Well, the Christian needs a stimulant.

He needs a stimulant that does give him an incredible nerve, a supernatural courage. You can't be a real Christian in this world without supernatural courage. But you also need a supernatural joy.

Otherwise, we just can't take it. Well, when we are filled with the Spirit of God, we do have a supernatural courage, and we do have a supernatural joy. The fullness of the Spirit is a sort of divine drunkenness, a spiritual intoxication with the sheer wine of God, the sheer wine of heaven.

But it doesn't leave any nasty hangover. Now, the other thing I want to point out in this verse is the Greek tense, being filled with the Spirit. There are two ways of giving an order in Greek.

There is the simple imperative tense, and there is the continuous or progressive imperative tense. Supposing you say to me, Ralph, clap your hands, and you use the simple tense. Well, I just clap my hands.

I've obeyed you. But if you say, Ralph, clap your hands, and you use the continuous form, then I've got to keep on clapping my hands. Well, now, the Apostle Paul uses the continuous form of the imperative tense here.

He is not saying, get filled with the Spirit once for all, a once-for-all act that you can label and bottle up. But he is saying, you've got to keep getting filled with the Spirit all the time. It's a continuous, progressive act of God.

Just as you're giving out all the time with love, good works, witness, evangelism, in the same way you're receiving all the time through prayer and the Word and fellowship. And we have to keep getting filled with the Spirit all the time, moment by moment. And of course, if in one minute's time I commit a sin, that immediately blocks the action of the Spirit of God.

If I sin and do not immediately get that thing put right, then the Spirit of God ceases to fill me. I'm just left to my own devices. But if I confess that sin and get it right, instantly the Spirit of God is prepared to come in again, because the blood of Christ has already dealt with the question of that sin at the cross.

I want to mention a little bit more about that later on. So, having seen the picture that the Apostle Paul, that the Bible gives us of the fullness of the Spirit, I now want to go on to what I call the seven progressive acts

of the Spirit of God, which are simply the result of the fullness. When we are filled with the Spirit of God, what can we expect? What does the New Testament actually teach us? Well, I have found a multitude of things, but I think they can all be grouped under these seven headings.

The first is the witness of the Spirit. In Romans 8, we read that the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. This is Romans 8 and... Can anybody see the verse? Sixteen, thank you, brother.

Yes, the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. The moment I believe in Christ and the Spirit of God saves me, in that moment He says to me, you are a child of God, your sins are forgiven. I know it because the Bible says it, I know it because the blood of Christ was shed for me, but I know it also because the Spirit of God just writes this into my heart.

He says to me, it's done. People say to me, how do you know? I just say, I can't explain it, but I just do know. I know why it is, I know because of the Word of God, because of the blood of Christ, but also the Spirit of God just tells me I am a child of God.

I know it, I look up into the face of my Father and I see Him now. God is real to me. But the Spirit of God doesn't only witness to us, He also witnesses through us.

And in John 15, at the end of John 15, Christ promised that the Spirit of God would do this in His believers, in His disciples. John 15, verses 26 and 27, He says, So when we witness to what we know of Christ to other people, the Spirit of God also backs up our witness, if we are filled with the Spirit of God. But if we are not filled and we are just trying to witness in our own strength, our witness doesn't cut ice at all.

But if we are filled with the Spirit of God, it isn't just Ralph Shallis or Tom Dick or Harry witnessing. There are two of us witnessing. The Spirit of God is witnessing at the same time as I am witnessing.

And He can get behind the barriers and the prejudices and the arguments of the man I'm witnessing to. And even if He may contest my own witness, the Spirit of God can be just putting His finger on that man's conscience. And this is what convicts man.

So the witness of the Spirit is twofold. First of all, to me and then through me. If I'm filled with the Spirit, the witness is very strong.

The knowledge and the glory and the joy of being a child of God becomes every day more marvelous. And also the ability and the joy to witness for Christ around us becomes more and more effective each day. The second thing, which there's no chronological sequence in this, and perhaps not even a logical sequence.

All these things happen at the same time, I believe, or should do. The second thing is the fruit of the Spirit, which we see in Galatians 5 and verse 22. Paul says the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Nine words. I once heard a man say that these nine words are the shortest biography of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's the summary of the character of Jesus.

If I'm filled with the Spirit of God, he produces in me the character of Christ. This is the flower of the tree of life. And in the heart of the flower, as the summer brings it to maturity, is formed the fruit, which in its turn contains the seed.

And as the autumn comes, the seed is liberated and reproduces the life of the tree right and left. And the ability to lead other souls to Christ comes from spiritual maturity when the character of Christ has been perfected in us, wrought out in us. And much of this can only be wrought out through real suffering.

So if I am filled with the Spirit of God, I am filled with love. This is the first part of the fruit of the Spirit. And of course, Paul says that love is the fulfilling of the law.

He who has loved his neighbor has fulfilled the whole law. If I love God with all my heart, I shall spontaneously keep the commandments that concern him. I shan't want to do anything else.

And if I love my neighbor as myself, I shan't want to do him any harm. I shall only want to do him good and, if necessary, give my life for him. If I am filled with this God, I shall also love my brother as Christ has loved me.

It sounds a totally impossible kind of phenomenon, but it is a fact. I know as I've come to OM conferences and met OM teams year after year, as well as many, many other Christians, as I look into the faces of many of the people that I know, some of whom I've only spoken to for a minute or two, I just know that I love them. I wouldn't dare to say as Christ has loved me or as the Father has loved the Son, but I know that it's that kind of love.

And if only all of us can be filled with the Spirit and remain filled with the Spirit, that love is developed to the most intense degree. It's a love of utter purity but of consuming power. And it is this love which convinces the other people.

Christ said to his disciples, you remember, it's by this that all men will know that you're my disciples. How is it that men recognize the authenticity of our witness? It isn't because I've... How do men recognize the authenticity of our witness? It isn't because we have so much power or we're so strict on doctrine or because we have this or that or the other. They recognize it because we are full of the love of God.

This is what convinces people. And if I stand up here and I haven't got the real love of God in my heart for each one of you, then you can be absolutely certain I am not filled with the Spirit. Even if I preach with power and convince you and convict you and bring you on your knees weeping, I am not filled with the Spirit.

It's something else doing all that. I don't mean that the Spirit-filled Christian who is full of the love of God isn't also full of power. I don't mean that at all.

But the power of God is not always manifested in thunder and fire and blood. It's also manifested in the springing of a little flower and in the conception of a little child, in the birth of a soul, in the radiance of the dawn. The third thing which I believe is a manifestation of the Spirit of God when we are filled, we'll see in 2 Corinthians 13, 14, the last verse of 2 Corinthians.

I'm only able to give you just one or two verses for each feature. I only wish that I had a whole hour to develop each aspect of the subject. But I'm just trying to give you, as I said the other day, a skeleton work on which to build your own doctrine of the Spirit, but your own study of the Bible, teaching on this subject.

I just hope that these things will help you to get things a bit clarified. I don't expect you to believe what I say. I don't even want you to believe what I say.

I want you to believe what God says in his Word. I don't mind if you reject everything that I say, so long as you really become a deep student of the Word of God and discover what God himself says and put it into practice. That's my only objective here among you, and to give you a desire to know God face to face and therefore to read your Bible in order to obtain such a knowledge of God.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Like so many wonderful verses in the Bible, this is quoted and quoted and quoted Sunday after Sunday, day after day, all over the world, without peoples ever realizing what it means. The grace of Christ.

I think that what characterizes great Christ most of all is grace. You can sum up the whole personality and life and work of Jesus Christ in this word grace, which means the beauty of God and the generosity of God. And what characterizes God more than anything else is love, and what characterizes the Spirit of God more than anything else, I believe, is fellowship.

That is sharing. Because he exists in order to share God with men, in order to share Christ with the Father, in order to share Christ out among us, in order to express Christ and share out with every conscious being in the universe the thought of God which is Christ. The word fellowship or communion simply means sharing in Greek, having the things in common.

And the Spirit of God brings us into fellowship with the Father so that we share Jesus Christ, we share everything that is precious to God, we share the sum total of all that God is, all that he loves, all that he seeks ever to do and to fulfill, and that he calls his Son. We share this with God the Father. It's terrific.

Well, then when we begin to share Christ with one another, when the Spirit of God is able to draw us into this same fellowship that exists with the Father, well, you can truly say that God is on earth. You can truly say we're beginning to live in heaven, even here on earth. And this is what brings people into the kingdom.

This is how the teams get soul saved. When people come into contact with a group of people who are living in this way, they know this is the truth. When my wife and I were in North Africa years ago as missionaries, I knew some missionaries, dear faithful men and women, who had been in that country for 40 or 50 years, some of them had not even seen a single convert.

And yet, in five years, we had so many converts that we asked God to stop converting people because we didn't know what to do. We were absolutely worn out with having to cope with all the fruit that was coming. It was very difficult to get the first two or three converts.

But once God had made those, and he welded them with me and with my wife into such a spiritual unity, such fellowship, that Jesus Christ was always there wherever we were. If we met in the street or in a bus or anywhere else or in a cafe, he was there. Prayer was as natural as breathing.

Jesus Christ was just one of us. And the people who came into contact with this little group just knew that this was the truth. We were terribly persecuted.

Each year the little nucleus grew. And each year it was persecuted and a lot of the people were driven away. All the chaff was sifted out from the wheat.

Then the next year there would be another harvest. Finally, there was an absolute explosion which lasted for quite a long time, people being saved all the time, nothing seemed able to stop it. What was it that saved these people? Simply the presence of Jesus Christ in the middle of the whole gang.

If any two of them met anywhere in the street or anywhere, as they shook hands, it's just like an electric spark, the presence of Christ was there. And it was impossible for any two of us to meet anywhere, even for a second, or even just shaking hands in the street, without praying to Jesus Christ. He was so real.

And this is how quite a few young Muslims got converted. I've even seen a Muslim, he's in Paris today, he's a fine Christian. He was quite young when he was converted.

He was converted from scratch in two or three hours. I've never known any other Muslim converted like that. And what converted him, it was just the presence of Jesus Christ.

And other Muslims we saw just come into the kingdom of God, and atheists, and Jews. I remember one prayer meeting when there were about 30 of us. We didn't call it a prayer meeting, we didn't call any meeting a prayer meeting or anything else.

We just came together and we did whatever God wanted us to do. And whatever we did, well, we just had the presence of Christ there. But I remember after about 20 minutes or half an hour praying, there must have been several hundreds of little prayers that just went up to God.

The praying was simple, just a word or a sentence, nothing more. Everybody praying one after the other, like flames going up onto the altar. Lord, please bless us.

Lord, save so and so. Lord, you're marvellous. Well, there were only two unconverted people in that meeting.

They were both young fellows, Jews, and they were both saved in that prayer meeting. This sort of thing was typical of the kind of way that God worked. And I believe that if we can only recover and keep the true conception of the Church, because this is Christ's conception of the Church, a living cell that can just reproduce itself ad infinitum.

If only we can recover and keep this kind of conception over these next few years, I believe we could see a divine action of God's Spirit go around the world like a flame of fire. And it wouldn't be something just ephemeral. It wouldn't be built on illusory experiences.

Not if these people are taught to study their Bibles and to pray and to witness and sacrifice as we endeavour to teach our own converts. So the fellowship of the Spirit is on two levels, the vertical plane and the horizontal plane, with God and with one another. If you like, you can think of it as the plus life or the crucified life, to help you to remember.

Then the next thing is the intercession of the Spirit. In Romans, chapter 8, we read that the Spirit of God himself intercedes with us with groanings that cannot be uttered. And Christ calls him the other advocate.

I prefer that translation to the word comforter or counsellor. The word in Greek means several things. But in 1 John 1, 2, Christ is called our advocate.

If any man sins, we have an advocate with the Father. It's the same word, parakletos, in Greek. And Christ said before he died, I will pray to the Father to send you another advocate.

So we have two advocates. We have one here on earth, the Spirit of God, in us, with us. And in heaven, at the right hand of God, we have another one.

The Spirit of God is, so to speak, my solicitor. Christ is my barrister. If anything goes wrong down here, I just place my case in the hands of my solicitor.

He sends a telephone call up to heaven, and my barrister just pleads my case in front of the Father. And the accuser, on the other side, who accuses the brethren night and day, has his mouth shut when Jesus Christ reminds him that his blood was shed for my sin. And Satan has no right to interfere with the Spirit of God's work in my heart.

So the Spirit of God prays for us. But he doesn't only pray for us. He prays through us.

And in Jude, we have a short verse which speaks of praying in the Holy Ghost. This Bible isn't marked in my normal way, and I can't find the verse. Can someone tell me the verse? Oh, verse 20.

Pray in the Holy Spirit. It's the Holy Spirit who was in Christ, who prayed through Christ when he was on earth, too. It's the Spirit of God himself who prays through us.

Read the life of praying Hyde, and see the way the Spirit of God got hold of that man. When God can find a man whom he can use to pray, he'll just squeeze him like a lemon. And that's what happened to Hyde.

Each year the pressure was greater. There came a time when Hyde had to take hold of God for an average of one soul a day. And he got 400 souls saved that year.

The next year, God put on the pressure and told him to pray for two souls a day. And he got about 800 souls saved that year. This was in what is now Pakistan, North India at that time.

And then God stepped it up and made him get three souls a day. And then the last year, four souls a day. After that, he died, worn out.

But what a legacy he's left for the church and for the world. Then the fifth thing is the teaching of the Spirit. In the first epistle of John, the Spirit of God is called the anointing.

And we read that he teaches us in verse... This is just one verse I'm quoting. Verse 27, you don't need anyone to teach you as his anointing teaches you about everything and is true. And is no lie.

Just as it has taught you, abide in him. That doesn't mean that we have no need of doctors, teachers, and pastors, prophets in the church. God does teach us through all these means.

But ultimately, it is God himself who teaches us. And I believe that as young men and women, your greatest need, the greatest need that you have... ..is to give God enough time alone, now while you are young... ..for God to teach you direct, before men can clutter up your thinking too much with their interpretations. When I was a young man, I thought quite seriously of going to a Bible school.

And I'm sure it would have been a great blessing for me. This was long before I became a missionary. I didn't become a missionary until I was nearly 40.

I earned my living the ordinary way until I was 37. But when I was a young man, God said, no, first of all, listen to me alone. That's when I had to take my Bible and God said, read it right through each year.

All the men that God has ever used in history seem to have read their whole Bibles once a year at least. I felt this was the minimum I could offer God. God said to me, if you want to know me, give me time.

Give me at least a tenth of your time. It isn't good enough to give me a tenth of your money. Your money isn't very valuable.

If you lose ten pounds a day, you can get another ten pounds. But if you lose ten minutes a day, it's gone forever. God said to me, give me a tenth of your time.

I'll make it up for you in eternity. I don't know how many times over. Put it in the bank of heaven.

I said to the Lord, I don't know how I could possibly get two and a half hours a day, which is roughly what it amounts to. But God said, just choose. What do you want? What's your objective? Are you going to be content with just a very mediocre idea of what I am, a dim vision seeing me through an obscure glass remotely, just sort of jogging along up and down, or do you want to see me face to face? Do you really want to live in the intimacy of my presence? Do you want to be smitten down with the fire of my presence day and night? And in the end I said, Lord, anything.

Anything. So long as you reveal yourself to me. And I gave God a tenth of my time.

And from that time until now, that covenant between God and me has remained. I'll just mention this in passing, that my greatest enemy is the Church of Christ. My greatest enemy is the Church of Christ.

When I was earning my living, even during the war years, even in the army, in the deserts, in the ruined cities of Europe, I was able to get all my time with God. But it's the Christians today who prevent me from getting that time. I have to fight for it.

The fight of faith today is far harder than before, because most Christians do not have this habit. And yet they want me to be with them. They want me to help them.

They call me all over the place, all over France, all over Europe, and even beyond if I have time to go. But they don't give me enough time to be alone with God each day. Usually I refuse to have breakfast with anybody, because it's the only way I can be sure of starting the day with God, if I've been up late the night before.

But God said to me, Your body needs three meals a day, and so does your soul. Daniel found it was necessary. David found it was necessary.

And so I began to get the habit, when I was a young man, of meeting God in the morning, before anybody else could put any other kind of rubbish into my mind. I found it was easy to get the manna before the sun had melted it. And that early time with God, even though it often wasn't very long, if I had to work late at night, at least it was a precious time, and God made sure that I would get the rest of the time with Him each day.

And I used to say, Lord, whatever you do, keep your date with me in the middle of the day, keep your date with me at night, and keep your date with me in the morning. At first it was rather a struggle to get through to God each time. But after a while, after a few months, I found that God had begun to take me seriously.

He tested me. He tested me for several months before He really began to speak to me. But then He began to speak, and the light of God began to come through like, I just can't describe it, like as if there was a great dawn breaking over the whole universe.

And I began to see the face of Christ with the sum total of all the beauty and wisdom and intelligence and power, purity and righteousness of God concentrated in that marvellous human personality of Jesus. And I've said this several times before, I don't like saying it. I feel it's not a thing that you should say in public at all.

But I just don't know any other way to describe it, and I know that this has been a help to some people. God revealed Himself to me, and there came a point where I simply fell in love with God. I don't know whether you know what I mean.

You may just think I'm a fool. But I can tell you that it's worth a whole lifetime of suffering in order to have just one instant of such a revelation of God. And when you have known God, even dimly, even remotely like that, you don't want anything else.

You don't want anything that's second best. I must press on quickly. Just let's remember what Christ said in John 16.

Christ said that the Spirit of God would come with one objective, to reveal Christ. He said, He will take the things of mine and reveal them to you. John 16.

The Spirit of God really has only one thing He wants to teach us. He wants to reveal Christ. Because as we see Christ, Christ becomes the lens, or the telescope if you like, or I don't know how you like to think of Him, through which we see God.

All the spectrum of God's white light is broken up in the person of Christ into the most marvellous colours of every possible aspect of divine truth. And of course, if you want the Spirit of God to reveal Christ to you, you've got to read this book. If you go to university and you sit at the feet of a certain well-known professor and you study some subject, and he has written a master textbook on the subject, and he does all his lecturing based on his textbook.

If you don't read and study that textbook, the professor will never be able to teach you what he's really got in his mind. And in fact, he won't. He won't treat you as a serious pupil.

He'll probably say, you'd better go and study something else. The Spirit of God is the professor of God in the university of God. And he's written his master textbook.

And if you really want him to teach you, get to know this book inside out. I myself was taught by God to read the two testaments together day by day, beginning at Matthew and Genesis, and just reading it straight through continuously each year. And each year I was able to follow the development of God's thought.

It was wonderful. After going through the Bible several times, I really began to feel I was beginning to understand God's thinking process. Now, after about 40 years of reading the Bible through each year, I realize I've hardly even begun to understand what it's all about.

But each year it becomes more and more marvelous, more and more deep and profitable. I must be very quick now. The sixth thing is the guidance of the Spirit.

When Israel came out of Egypt, the first thing that happened to them was that they received the cloud. They received the presence of the Spirit of God. And that cloud guided them all the way into Canaan.

But they had to keep mighty close to the cloud, and they had to watch it, and they had to obey its movements. They had to be ready to pack up their tents in the middle of the night, two o'clock in the morning. If the cloud decided to go, they had to move.

They had to be totally mobile. On the other hand, if the cloud stayed for two years somewhere, they just had to wait. And we've got to learn to wait upon the presence of God.

God won't fail to guide us if we remain close to the cloud. There's much more I would like to say about guidance, but I can't now. In Romans 8, Paul says that it's the sons of God who are led by the Spirit of God.

And then, finally, the gifts of the Spirit. And my time has really gone, and I haven't even got to the other three commandments. I would like to say several things about the gifts of the Spirit, but there really isn't time for anything now.

But will you just look briefly at 1 Corinthians 12, where Paul gives his basic teaching on this subject. Remember that the Epistle to the Corinthians was written to a carnal church, full of confusion and troubles. And Paul deals just with one problem after another in this church.

Divisions, immorality, problems about marriage, disorder at the Lord's Supper, problems about food offered to idols, problems about the role of a woman in the church, and then problems about spiritual gifts in chapters 12, 13, and 14, and finally, even problems about the doctrine of the resurrection. They certainly were in a bad way at Corinth. And in chapter 12, Paul deals with this question of spiritual gifts.

In Corinth, they got it all out of focus, and Paul is just trying to bring them back to spiritual realities. He says, now look, the church is the body of Christ. Whoever saw a body with just one enormous hand, or one huge tongue, or just one great ear, the body is a marvelous thing of beauty and utility that God has invented.

God is the architect of the body. He thought of the body. He created the body.

He gave the body its members. He decided how many eyes, ears, hands, fingers, lungs, hearts the body should have, and where they should be placed, and how they should function. And Paul says in this chapter that God has put us all in the body as he wants us, each one with his own function, like a marvelous teamwork, so that working together, God, the head, which is Christ, the brain, can coordinate everything in order to fulfill the work of God.

And Paul says quite plainly, you haven't all got the same spiritual gift. We're not all apostles. We're not all prophets.

We're not all evangelists. We don't all work miracles. We don't all have tongues or anything else.

He says, we've got to find out from God what our function is in the body of Christ. What does God really want us to do? And there are several key verses in this chapter. I'd just like to mention that you might note them.

In verse 4 he says there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit. And in verse 7 he says, to each is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good, not for your personal satisfaction. If God gives me a spiritual gift, it isn't so that I can sort of feel good about it, or so that it does me good necessarily.

Mind you, it will do me good. But it's for the common good. It's for you.

It's not for me. It's for the church. It's for the evangelization of the world.

It's so that Christ can use me in order to bring men to himself, in order to revive the church, in order to build up the church, in order to get the world evangelized, in order to alleviate all misery and suffering in this world. That's what my spiritual gift is for. And then in verse 11, after a certain list of gifts, Paul gives us four lists of gifts which are all different, and which are certainly not exhaustive.

I know many, many spiritual gifts which aren't mentioned by Paul. What about that woman who wrote the hymn Just As I Am, through whom perhaps hundreds of thousands of people have been saved? Paul didn't mention that gift in his list. There are many gifts.

But anyway, Paul says, verse 11, All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit who apportions to each one individually as he wills. It's the Spirit of God who decides what our function is in the body of Christ. We haven't any right to dictate to God.

I can't say to God, You've got to make me an apostle, or you've got to make me a worker of miracles. I can say to the Lord, Please give me the best possible. And this is what Paul says at the end of the chapter.

He says, verse 31, Earnestly desire the best gifts. This is the only commandment that we have about gifts. We've got to desire spiritual gifts, but we've got to desire especially the best gifts.

So ask God to give you the best he can give you, the thing which will get the most people saved, the most people sanctified, the most people blessed and helped. If God only gives you something relatively minor, well accept it with gratitude, but ask him for the most he's prepared to give you. And then, in verse 13, Paul says, By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.

All of us, past tense, baptized into one body. And then, in verses 14 onwards, he speaks of the different members of the body and shows how each of them is necessary and useful. And he says, in verse 25, It's so that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

And then, in verse 27, he says, You are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church. So God decides what we do in the church.

First, apostles. Second, prophets. Third, teachers.

Then, then, then, then. So there's a definite gradation in the importance of gifts. It would be wonderful if we could all be apostles.

If we can't be that, at least we might be prophets or evangelists. But God gives us each what we are able to do. What he estimates is valid for us.

But there are some things that are more important than others. And I consider that in Ephesians 4, the five gifts that are mentioned there are the five absolutely indispensable gifts for the church. Apostle, that is missionary.

Prophet, that is the man who's always bringing the church back to God and back to the word of God. Evangelist, that's the man who gets people converted and evangelized, not necessarily on a platform. And

then, teachers, men who have the real gift for giving us the whole word of God integrally and without any axe to grind.

And fifthly, pastors, shepherds, who are able to look after all the souls and visit them and care for them and find out their problems and troubles and get them really right with the Lord. Well, any other gifts that God can give his church on top of those, hallelujah, thank God for it. May God just load us all with spiritual gifts.

But those five gifts are indispensable if the work of God is to go forward. Now, I'm just going to spend a moment on those other three commandments. I can't, I'm afraid I just can't stop like that.

I've just got another two or three minutes maybe that I can take. The other three commandments are these, and I must leave you really to sort them out with God. In Ephesians 4.30, we are told, Grieve not the Spirit of God.

Isaiah tells us that Israel grieved the Spirit of God in the desert, and the Spirit of God turned around and became their enemy. Israel grieved the Spirit of God because they just went on disobeying and refused to acknowledge their sin. And there came a time when the Spirit of God just ceased to bless them anymore.

Well now, I believe that what grieves the Spirit of God is sin, but not merely sin, but retaining that sin unconfessed and not put right. So what we must do is watch our conscience. I believe that in these last three commandments I'm giving you, there are the three basic principles of the Christian life.

They are the three conditions for the fullness of the Spirit of God. The first one, this one concerning grieving the Spirit, concerns our conscience. We've got to keep our conscience right with God and men, as Paul says in Acts 23.24. He says, I've lived in all good conscience before God and men until this day.

He didn't mean he hadn't sinned, but he'd always kept his conscience right. Well now, you watch your conscience every morning when you get up, every night when you go to bed, and all day long. And be ready to confess all your sin instantly to God.

1 John 1.9 tells us that if we confess our sins to our Heavenly Father, He forgives. And just as we took our forgiveness from God as judge, the day we were born again by faith, so God wants you to take His fatherly forgiveness by faith every time you confess your sin and just believe that you're forgiven. And that takes away the barrier, and again the Spirit of God can fill you and bless you.

Then the next commandment is 1 Thessalonians 5.19, quench not the Spirit. To quench means to resist. When the flame wants to come up, you cover it and you push it down again.

It's disobeying. Just as the first commandment concerns our conscience, this one concerns our will. There are two obstacles to faith, an evil conscience and an evil will.

And these are the two things that we've got to examine every day, all the day, and let the Word of God examine these two things and correct us the whole time. We have to examine ourselves each day to see whether really we are obedient, whether we really are prepared to obey God and do anything and everything that God tells us instantly. In that position, God can bless us.

This is when the Spirit of God takes over and comes in. And if these two obstacles are taken away, we are then in a position to fulfill the last commandment concerning the Holy Spirit, which is in Galatians 5.16,

walk by the Spirit. And this again is the continuous tense.

Keep walking by the Spirit. Why walk? Because in Paul's day, the only way of getting from Ephesus to Smyrna or A to B was to walk or to sit on something that walked. You could only go a step at a time.

There was no other means of locomotion. And the only way in the kingdom of, in the spiritual realm that we can go forward is by going a step at a time. If you don't take the first step now, if you don't do what God's telling you to do now, He won't be able to tell you what to do next.

You've got to obey God now. Even if you can't see what happens afterwards, do what God tells you now and go forward. It may be quite impossible, like Israel at the Red Sea.

And God said, go forward. Israel at Jordan, go forward. Christ to the man with the withered arm, lift it up.

Before it was healed, lift it up by faith. And it was healed. The obedience of faith.

The paralyzed man, get up. Not I'll heal you first and then you get up. Get up.

The obedience of faith. And so you see, this last one, this last commandment can be summed up in the word faith. And everything can be summed up in faith.

Faith in Jesus Christ. And to believe in Christ means that we go forward obeying Him in faith and we rely on the Spirit of God to take us through. We realize that all the power, energy, intelligence, wisdom of God, all that even the universe can't contain, is here at our disposal, ready to be poured through us and used through us for doing the will of God.

I do not believe that we can have the fullness of the Holy Spirit just for our own satisfaction. I believe it is only given to us for doing the will of God. But when we do the will of God, we are not only satisfied, but we are filled with the joy of heaven and the peace of Christ.

Let us pray. Father, I know that the human instrument through which your Spirit has wished to speak to us this morning is so imperfect, so ignorant, so sinful by nature. That I realize that many things must have come through quite distorted.

And I ask your forgiveness for anything that has not been according to the mind of Jesus Christ. But we do pray together that everything that is true, the real true content of your Word may be burnt into our souls and may become a part of the fiber of our being. We pray that you will think through our brains and act through our hands and that you will speak through our mouths.

Oh God, we want to give ourselves to you afresh so that you may take us and use us. Lord, this precious gift of the fullness of the Spirit, we realize it is a holy obligation which we dare not, must not refuse. But we pray also that you will keep us from the enemy's incredibly subtle attempts to disguise himself as the Spirit of God, to disguise himself as an apostle of Christ, an angel of light.

God, keep us at the foot of the cross, keep us at the feet of Christ, and keep us faithful to your Word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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