

Walking by the Spirit

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. - Galatians 5:25

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Chapter 1 - Human Anatomy

Knowing how we are made can help us understand how we should live - Anonymous

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. - 1 Thessalonians 5:23

If we want to know how to walk in the Spirit, we should first consider the three main components of human existence, the body, soul, and spirit. The body is something we are very familiar with. We are born with it and haul it around with us until we die. Often it deteriorates significantly before actual physical death.

The soul is something a little more difficult to understand as it is not observable such as when we see the body in a mirror.

The Hebrew term for “soul” is nephesh and it is found more than 780 times in the Old Testament. It is not always translated into English word “soul.” The KJV uses 28 different words to translate the word. Nephesh, therefore, signifies different things, depending upon the context of the verse.

Similarly, in the Greek New Testament, the original word for “soul” is psuche, found 103 times. Our modern word “psychology” derives from this Greek term. “Soul” may signify merely an individual person, his life, or the mental and emotional facilities that can exist apart from the physical body.

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. - Hebrews 4:12

Here we have a indication of the difficulty in separating an understanding of soul from spirit. Both the words soul and spirit refer to parts of human existence that are immaterial. It can be confusing especially when contrasting the material with the immaterial to see the distinction.

It can be helpful to consider the soul as where the mind, emotions, desires, and affections reside.

Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? was not my soul grieved for the poor? - Job 30:25

(For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) - 2 Peter 2:8

And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation. - Psalm 35:9

If we consider just the body and soul, we can see material and immaterial components. It is when we try to differentiate the spirit, that it becomes more difficult.

Chapter 2 - A Working Hypothesis

It may be helpful to construct a working model of our constituent parts to use in considering how we as Christians are to respond to and walk by the power of the Holy Spirit.

If we think of Adam and Even as being created with a bodies, souls, and spirits, we can see that Satan appealed to the desire of the soul and first tempted Eve to sin and subsequently Adam chose to sin. They had been warned by God that on the day they sinned, they would “die”. One can see a picture of everyone born physically since then as having a “dead” or ineffective spirit.

Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) - Ephesians 2:5

We can think of being “born again” or receiving eternal life by the spirit of Christ in us as the moment when we cross from death to life.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. - John 5:24

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. - Romans 8:9

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? - John 3:7-10

It is interesting to note that it was expected that as a teacher Nicodemus should have understood that it was needful for a “birth” to restore that which could then receive eternal life.

Those who have not been “born again” are unable to have eternal life and come into judgment. After having been judged according their works they suffer for their sins and ultimately suffer the “second death”.

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. - Matthew 10:28

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. - Revelation 20:6

It is helpful to view our spirit as something which was dead or inactive and by virtue of the work of the Holy Spirit has been made alive.

You have been regenerated (born again), not from a mortal origin (seed, sperm), but from one that is immortal by the ever living and lasting Word of God. - 1 Peter 1:23

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. - 2 Corinthians 5:17

This new creation (the Christian with a regenerated spirit) is configured with a body that interacts with the physical world and a spirit which interacts with God. In between these two is his soul where choices are made that influence whether the body has a more worldly or spiritual orientation.

People without this spiritual regeneration (those who are not Christian) are compelled by the influences of the old sinful nature (called the “flesh”). These are those that Satan can organize to accomplish his goals.

And that they may come to their senses [and] escape out of the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him, - 2 Timothy 2:26a AMP

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: - Ephesians 2:2

Many of those who declare their hostility towards God and reject him thinking themselves free, come evermore under the control of Satan who despises them and desires to use them as pawns to advance his own plans. These sad people (dead in their sins) having no hope of eternal life have no way (unless God in his mercy should intervene) to recognize much less accept the truth.

How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. - Jude 1:18-19

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. - 1 Corinthians 2:14

But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man. - Matthew 15:18-20

Sometimes the word “heart” is used to refer to the actual physical heart (cardia). However, often it is used to refer to what might be considered an appendage to the soul. It can be thought of as a repository for those things we hold as integral to our life. It can sort of work as an “automatic pilot” from which we are inclined to act in one way or another.

Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: - 2 Peter 2:14

Here we see that the heart can though “exercise” become filled with that which inclines actions and even thoughts. In this case towards evil.

In contrast to the “automatic pilot” influence on our lives that our heart exercises through the soul, there is the “manual control” that is our mind. Here we evaluate, consider, reflect, and conclude. It can be easier and more comfortable to go through life sort of on “cruise control” being directed by what we have allowed in our heart. However, the Christian is called to a life of intentional control by which the heart can be purged of its old inclinations and sort of reprogrammed with that which can be drawn from the Spirit.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. - Romans 12:2

While we can visualize the mind and heart as part of the soul, it is less clear to see how our old nature

operates.

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. - Romans 6:1

It seems that there are material elements to this nature (“body of sin”, the flesh) as well as immaterial elements (what was put to death at salvation). It seems as if our new birth resulting in salvation in some way disables the compulsive aspect of our old nature. As a result, we are freed from the power of sin, but not the influence. While some verses emphasize that we are free from the compelling nature of sin, the Christian desiring to walk by the power of the Holy Spirit has to understand that there is still within us something that opposes this effort.

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. - Galatians 5:17

When we Christians face our own inclination to sin, it can help to understand that there is some physical component in our body as well as an immaterial component in our soul that resists the intention of our mind to follow Christ.

WHAT LEADS to strife (discord and feuds) and how do conflicts (quarrels and fightings) originate among you? Do they not arise from your sensual desires that are ever warring in your bodily members? - James 4:1 AMP

It can be frustrating, especially for new Christians, to read about the peace, love, and joy that the Christian life should offer and yet somehow feel cheated because it isn’t experienced. The reason for this is that often there is much we need to learn, understand, practice, and change.

My little children, for whom I am again suffering birth pangs until Christ is completely and permanently formed (molded) within you, - Galatians 4:19 AMP

Chapter 3 - Perfect Harmony

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. - Matthew 22:37

God would have us live a holy life. The commandment to “love” God is more than a suggestion that we make a brief expression of affection. Love in the biblical sense is selflessness. One might think of it as the complete surrender of any self-interest.

Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. - 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Resisting this command to love God is every inclination of our old nature to serve self. Paul describes clearly the frustration of dealing with this inclination;

For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not. For the good which I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practise. But if what I would not, that I do, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me. -

Romans 7:18-20

Paul also tells us the solution;

Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? - Romans 7:24

Here we see that the solution to our sinful nature is no so much a “how” or a “what”, but a “who”. The solution is a new nature that comes through the regeneration of our spirit by the work of the Holy Spirit as a result of our faith in Jesus.

And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ: till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: - Ephesians 4:11-13

Here we see the plan of our salvation and regeneration, that we mature to the “fullness of Christ”.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. - James 3:17-18

There is a process of Christian growth and maturity that we are supposed to follow as we mature in Christ. Similar to planting a crop, the Christian is to grow to produce a harvest accomplished by the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. - Galatians 5:22-23

Chapter 4 - Falling Short

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? - 1 Corinthians 3:1-3

It can be confusing for Christians to read about the love, peace, unity, and harmony to which we are called and resolve it with the strife, arguments, and worldliness so observable in most of actual Christian practice.

Being “carnal” means “of the flesh” or the old nature. When a person becomes a Christian, he gets a new nature, but that does not mean the old one disappears. The re-emergence of the influence of the old nature can be seen in the letter Paul wrote the Galatians.

Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? - Galatians 3:3

The Galatians had accepted the instruction of “experts” from Jerusalem who were telling them they needed to add Jewish practices such as circumcision to their Christian walk. It is instructive to consider what happened in Galatia because it is so representative of how we can come to be diverted into walking in the flesh.

The Galatians were not seeking to do evil. They were probably not even aware that what they were doing was wrong. They probably had a sincere desire to be faithful to do what was right. They let themselves be deceived by those claiming the authority to tell them what was right.

We live in a society that de-emphasizes personal responsibility to such a degree that even criminals often think that their crimes were not their fault. Given such a social environment, it can be even more difficult to consider that the Galatians are taken to task and held accountable for their individual failure in discernment and vigilance to remain faithful.

It is interesting to note that church members are not held blameless because they were misled by their "leadership". Here is an important difference between modern church practice and that of the New Testament times, the idea that church membership requires unquestioning acceptance of prepackaged dogma and compliant observance of established practices has more in common with the Pharisees than the early church.

Almost all failure to walk by the Spirit can be traced back to getting diverted into some variation of walking in the flesh. At first glance the failure of the Galatians may be seen as choosing the wrong doctrine (an emphasis on works). However, at a deeper level the failure was a surrender of their individual responsibility to seek, evaluate and find truth.

Underlying and leading to the act of being misled into walking by the flesh instead of the Spirit was a sort of spiritual laziness that made the Galatians vulnerable to false teachings. One of the quickest ways to drift from the path of walking by the Spirit is to switch to a sort of "automatic pilot" type of Christian life. In contrast a Christian life of active seeking and evaluating provides protection from deception.

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. - Acts 17:10-11

In contrast to the Galatians who could be misled, the Christians in Berea were actively seeking and evaluating truth. The process of Christian growth that the Holy Spirit would have us undertake, requires our active participation.

Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. - Hebrews 5:11-14

Here we have a description of a condition more familiarly known as a "lapse". The example of Hebrews is one of losing spiritual ground through a failure to "exercise". The resulting growth of "dullness" is a regression such that they are described as having to start over in their Christian life.

The failure of the Hebrews is one of neglecting salvation as a result of finding others things of more interest, value, and attraction. We can learn important lessons from the Hebrews and Galatians as the same things that happened to them can happen to us and for the same reasons.

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; - Hebrews 2:1-3

All too often we let “slip” away the riches in Christ for the comforts of the flesh. It is understandable, but not necessary as God has provided the means to overcome the flesh.

Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. - Mark 14:38

Chapter 5 - Biblical walking

Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no. - Exodus 16:4

Even though God had promised Abraham he would make a nation out of his descendants, the nation of Israel was still on probation. God became so angry with the nation of Israel, he was tempted to exterminate them and create a new nation from Moses.

Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. - Exodus 32:10

If one considers “walking” as how one conducts one’s life, we can see that God desired that Israel would adapt themselves to the law that they had agreed to follow when the covenant was established and the ten commandments received. Israel would be negligent if they failed to do this. However, they would be rebellious if they adopted an entirely different “walk”.

And ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you: for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them. - Leviticus 20:23

Unfortunately Israel refused to follow the “walk” they had agreed to and it was only after the nation had been taken captive to Babylon for 70 years that they finally gave up the practice (walk) of idolatry.

Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the LORD, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law. - Isaiah 42:24

Here we see a differentiation between walking in the ways of the Lord and obeying his laws. This seems to be lost on the later Pharisees as they made a religion of rule following that ironically carried them away from faithfulness to God.

What may not be fully appreciated is that obedience and law keeping are like the tip of the iceberg. They are an effect of something deeper. The Pharisees mistakenly considered rule following to be the

entirety of what God desired.

But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. - Matthew 9:13

Jesus instructed the Pharisees that they were mistaken to focus on just the superficial. He pointed to deeper truths that were essential to please God.

For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. - Hosea 6:6

Hosea speaks in the context of the failures of Ephraim and Judah (the divided nation of Israel) and the frustration of God with their rebellion. If one looks only at external actions, one can miss the inclination of the heart from which actions arise. For example, the actions of the Pharisees appeared to be righteous.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. - Matthew 23:27-28

Perhaps the most iconic of the laws that was given to the nation of Israel was circumcision. It becomes almost emblematic for identification with the law. It was key to how the Galatians were being turned away from walking by the Spirit to walking by the flesh. However, the more important issue of faith is used to show its centrality over even the observance of a key element of law.

And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. - Romans 4:12

Here we have the core of our “walk”, faith. The conduct of our lives is only an echo or reflection of that in which we trust. If we trust in our flesh, our actions will show a pursuit of pride, lust, or other selfish inclination. If we trust in God, our actions should reflect the degree of that trust (strength of that faith). Too many Christians follow the example of the Pharisees and attempt to do “good” using the power of their own strength (the flesh). As Christians we cannot “do good” but only allow God to work good through us. This is facilitated by the work of the Holy Spirit.

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. - Philippians 2:13

Our walk should not reflect our accomplishments, but our trusting in God to work in and through us. When we trust in the flesh, we do not have the ability to see any alternatives. We distance ourselves from God and quench his Spirit. As we draw nearer to our Savior, we begin to see with clarity, the path he would have us walk.

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. - John 8:12

For example, the person who follows Christ may abstain from alcohol, not so much because it is “evil” or can cause much pain for others, but more because the light of Jesus illuminates a path where the

sensations alcohol can produce hold no attraction.

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; - Ephesians 5:18-19

Too often we allow the inclination of the flesh to direct our walk. We sort of operate on automatic pilot. We are not to sleep walk though life but “seek the Lord while he may be found”.

Chapter 6 - Waking up

Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. - Ephesians 5:14

The first step in walking by the Spirit is to recognize that we need to. There are many life experiences that can serve to jolt us out of complacency such as the death of a loved one, loss of employment or reputation, health problems, divorce, or some other calamity. What these sometimes violent upheavals can do is shake our view of life and the world to its core. At these times a person can be more open to changes in the orientation and habit of the heart.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. - Psalm 51:17

Sometimes God will use an intense calling, as he did with David, to shake us out of a faith grown cold. However, it would be more to our advantage if we were to rouse ourselves from the spiritual lethargy to which we are all too often inclined.

His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. - Isaiah 56:10

We all tend to drift into the comfort of the familiar. This is in part due to our desire for ease and comfort. It is also a result of the favorable distortion of truth through which we often see ourselves.

The plans of the heart belong to man; All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; - Proverbs 16:1a-2a

Truth is key to walking by the spirit. Humility is the key to receiving truth. Yet before it all, we have to have a spark that drives and motivates us. It is when this spark dies out and becomes inert that we drift into complacency and disinterest in the things of the Spirit.

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. - Romans 13:11

One way to ignite a spark or awakening is to call to mind what Jesus has done for us .

Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; - 2 Peter 1:13

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. - 2 Corinthians 5:21

Gratitude can be a component of stirring a spark of motivation. However, a dynamic that is solely reactive soon runs out of steam. What is needed is an ongoing and growing force that brings us out of our slumber.

Much of our life is spent in the pursuit of that which we value. We endure the labors of each day to obtain that which we need to sustain us. When we remember Christ and what he did for us, we can see value, but it is a sort of value in the rear view mirror. It can feed gratitude, but perceived distance diminishes even that.

It is the perception of present and future value that can more strongly draw us closer to our Savior. Many people would be willing to pay almost any price for a diet pill that actually reduced hunger. The reason that they would be so willing is that they see great and immediate value.

It is when we can recognize in Christ a present value that we can begin to awaken the motivation to leave the comfort of the flesh and start to walk according to the Spirit.

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. - Philippians 4:13

Here we have an example of something that would have great value. "Strength" is something that we can all benefit from. While obviously not describing physical Sampson-like strength, we should also consider that the "all things" is not anything we might choose, but rather anything within the will of God. Part of the process of awakening is to recognize true value, verify this value through use, and come to rely on it as we draw nearer our Lord.

This exposes a critical limiting factor in getting a spark to be motivated to seek after the Lord. To be able to see value in the Lord, we have to be able to value the same things he does. For example, the Galatians were beginning to value something that the Lord does not.

Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. - Galatians 5:4

The real value we can see in Christ lies not so much in his granting our wishes, but in helping us repudiate the flesh and the world so that we can become useful for him in the work God has for us. We will not be able to truly value Christ until we can reject the false value of the flesh and desire the real value of surrender to God and the sublimation of self.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. - 1 John 2:15

We really start to awaken when our value for the things of the Lord becomes a growing passion. We can see with the example of David how that passion can become a foundation for a deeper walk with the Lord.

Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily. - Psalm 86:3

Chapter 7 - Becoming active

Satan has many traps to keep Christians inert and ineffective. However, even when a Christian actually seeks to draw near the Lord, there are also traps to divert and entangle a Christian into activities that are just as useless for the Lord.

Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. - Mark 7:13

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. - 1 John 1:8

Two common diversions are the legalism of rule following and libertine indulgences. Both are of the flesh and sadly both are very common. It can be helpful to consider the biblical model for drawing nearer the Lord;

Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.- James 4:5-10

While some might be tempted to turn this into a step by step procedure, it can be more helpful to see it as a process. One thing to note is that it is bracketed by humility. There are two parts to this process, things we do and things God does. God provides his grace which flows more freely into us through humility. This would be the first condition we need to begin to draw nearer to God.

Extending from humility would be submission to God. In a way, this authenticates humility. There is a type of false humility that when faced with submission to God evaporates. Submission can be thought of using the examples of a servant awaiting his masters orders or a soldier awaiting orders from his commander. We often fall short at this point because we may consider an occasional acknowledgment of God's supremacy as being the same as "submission".

The ability to resist the devil is closely related to our submission. A parallel illustration of this resistance can be seen using the example of spiritual armor.

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; - Ephesians 6:11-18

The warfare we encounter is not so much combat with individual evil entities, but more with the forces and influences these entities have woven into the fabric of society and the world. Consider how much of our modern world is permeated with entertainment, our relationships filled with superficial banter, and our schedules filled with time consuming activities. It is almost as if the modern world has been specifically designed to draw us away from our Creator.

Come close to God and He will come close to you. [Recognize that you are] sinners, get your soiled hands clean; [realize that you have been disloyal] wavering individuals with divided interests, and purify your hearts [of your spiritual adultery]. [As you draw near to God] be deeply penitent and grieve, even weep [over your disloyalty]. Let your laughter be turned to grief and your mirth to dejection and heartfelt shame [for your sins]. - James 4:8-9 AMP

And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. - 2 Corinthians 5:15

So much of human existence is based on what we can accomplish. It can seem strange that we are not called to confront, rebuke, or defeat the devil, but simply resist. This is because we have to rely on God to accomplish our protection. In the list of spiritual armor there is only one weapon that is offensive and that is the word of God. We have an example of how Jesus used this weapon;

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. - Luke 4:8

Some people think that getting active in the Christian life is about rule keeping, social justice, fighting Satan, or some other task. In reality the Christian life is about the diminishment of self and faithful dependence upon God.

He must increase, but I must decrease. - John 3:30

Christian “success” is not accomplishment, but surrender, submission, and patient endurance.

SO, SINCE Christ suffered in the flesh for us, for you, arm yourselves with the same thought and purpose [patiently to suffer rather than fail to please God]. For whoever has suffered in the flesh [having the mind of Christ] is done with [intentional] sin [has stopped pleasing himself and the world, and pleases God], So that he can no longer spend the rest of his natural life living by [his] human appetites and desires, but [he lives] for what God wills. - 1 Peter 4:1-2 AMP

The beginning of the active Christian life requires us to thirst for truth. As we grow in truth, we can see the world for what it is and being repulsed by it, cling more strongly to our Savior. Truth also illuminates who we really are and who God really is. This can only result in growing humility.

Chapter 8 - The Starvation Diet

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. - Romans 8:13

Hindering our Christian walk is our inclination toward what is called the flesh, old man, or sin nature.

The process of “mortification” (putting to death) is a continual one (present tense active). What is indicated here is not so much a death by action, but rather by inaction. If we do not feed the flesh, it will starve.

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. - Romans 13:14

People who have gone to Alcoholics Anonymous or even have tried dieting know how hard it is to fight against what the body desires. However, Christians do not have to solely rely on their own strength (ironically also the flesh) to try to muster the ability to purge out the old desires. The idea of “not” providing for the flesh is coupled with “putting on” the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: - Colossians 3:9-10

That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. - Ephesians 4:22-24

For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. - Galatians 3:27

The references to “putting on” and “putting off” use a sort of clothing illustration that pictures that with which we surround ourselves, move within, and carry with us. The clothing analogy can only go so far. Also pictured is a renewal in knowledge and in the spirit of our mind. This appertains towards internal processes.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. - Romans 12:2

Here we see a transformation accomplished by the renewing of our mind. It is contrasted with being conformed to this world. We can think of conformance as imprinting or being molded. The world, which has been designed to resonate with the flesh, exerts a powerful force to draw us into its systems. However, Christians have the opportunity to be “transformed” by having our minds reconfigured from a worldly orientation to a heavenly one.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: - Philippians 2:5

For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. - 1 Corinthians 2:16

For us to “let” the mind of Christ be in us, we have to make room. We have to be aware of our carnal and fleshly inclinations and make no provision for them. It is not so much a matter of our mastering them as it is a matter of our losing interest in them.

There has to be a sort of mental rearrangement. More than a brief acknowledgment that Jesus is good and we should be like him only to just go on with our normal engagement with the world and the routine of our daily lives, we need to change what we value and we seek. Unless this changes, we will keep “feeding” the flesh and unable to walk by the Spirit. Dormancy favors the flesh.

Solomon captures some of the passion with which we are to apply ourselves to a life lived for God;

My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path. When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: - Proverbs 2:1-11

Here we can see an example of how a motivation and directed action towards the things of God would automatically start a process of starving or allowing to die those more base inclinations of the flesh. In addition, we can observe that we are able to increasingly receive the things of God.

The “if / then” statements describe not only a promise, but a description of a process whereby we are able to draw nearer our Lord.

It is not by strength that we are able to restrain the flesh, rather it is by the power of disinterest. It is intended that the Christian would be so grateful for salvation and so eager to receive all that God has to give that this passionate reaction would almost automatically start the starvation and death of the flesh by neglect and disinterest.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. - Matthew 5:6

The Christian life is not so much about not sinning. It is not even so much about doing good. It is about letting God work through us for not only our own good, but the good of others. One can picture this cooperative state brought about inside of us as we learn to let go of those things that serve self and embrace that which demonstrates the love of God.

Chapter 9 - Maintaining Humility

One of the surest ways to fall short in our Christian walk is to allow the self to regain ascendance. The way to keep this in check is to constantly be maintaining a grip on humility. This is done with a ruthless view of truth as applied to ourselves.

Many people embrace truth as long as it exposes only the shortcomings of others. The Christian is called to a level of honesty that the self finds repulsive.

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. - Romans 12:3

The flesh finds pride a much more comfortable sensation than humility and as a result will seek to advance pride at every opportunity. While truth can make us humble, the discomfort of seeing ourselves as we really are can be mitigated not by pride, but by gratitude for Him who loved us even in our state of wretchedness so much that he laid his life down for us.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. - Romans 5:8

Here the discomfort of truth is not resolved with the comfort of delusion (pride), but with further truth that connects us directly to our Savior through gratitude for his mercy and love.

The reason humility needs to be constantly exercised is that we have a tendency to forget the truth about ourselves.

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. - James 1:22-24

Here we also see the importance of the Christian life lived in action. It helps to sustain our perspective of truth. When we put Christianity into practice, we are acknowledging it as the thing we value most. This alignment brings us more into alignment with God and thus able to receive constant truth from him that does not fade. In a way we can see this proximity to God as the means whereby we can be constantly “renewed”.

Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. - Psalm 55:22

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. - 2 Corinthians 4:16

It is through humility that more grace can flow to us from God. By maintaining humility we keep this critical door open.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; - Titus 2:11-12

Chapter 10 - Quenching the Spirit

Quench not the Spirit. - 1 Thessalonians 5:19

Most are familiar with the image of a blacksmith taking a piece of hot iron and plunging it into a bucket of water. The loud hiss testifies to the heat being taken out of the piece by the water as it is turned into steam. We have the ability to similarly deflate the power of the Holy Spirit. We can be unaware of this cessation of the work of the Spirit with the example of Sampson.

And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him. - Judges 16:20

To better understand what is lost when we quench the Spirit, we should examine what we can know of his work.

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified. - John 7:37-39

Here we have a picture of the Spirit indwelling a person such that an abundant and continual flow of “living water” will be found. We also find that the Spirit provides comfort and truth.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. - John 14:16-17

We can also see that the Spirit works to guide us in truth;

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. - John 16:13

We also have communicated to us assurance of our salvation.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: - Romans 8:16

We also have help from the Spirit who works for us way beyond what we can even understand. *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. - Romans 8:26*

We stand to lose a great deal (comfort, assurance, being guided in truth, and intercession) when we “quench” the work of the Spirit. Since the risk is so high, we should consider how it is that we accomplish this self-injury.

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. - Ephesians 4:30

Here we can see that the Holy Spirit can feel “grief” that we can cause. Presumably this emotional reaction is a result of hopes and expectations frustrated by poor choices we make. We all too often take a mechanical view of God and fail to appreciate his emotional range.

The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. - Psalm 145:8

We can see some of this hurt and regret with Jesus;

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! - Luke 13:34

We can see with the example of Jesus in his consideration of the people of Jerusalem the lament for lost opportunity. This may be similar to the “grief” felt by the Holy Spirit of the opportunities we have and yet squander.

God can be provoked to anger and wrath.

Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood. Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions. Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance. - Psalm 106:37-40

God is yet merciful when he sees that we turn from that which is deserving of punishment.

And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not. - Jonah 3:10

God has desires for us that we should be blessed with all he has to give us. When we respond to the inclinations of the flesh, we start to follow a path away from God. His Spirit is grieved and his work in us is reduced. Like throwing a bucket of water on a fire, what we could have been and what we could have done is either postponed or abandoned.

For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. - 2 Peter 1:8

Chapter 11 - Learning how to Walk

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. - Galatians 5:25

Most parents observe their children learning how to walk around the age of one. Driven by the motive to reach a destination, the physical skills are exercised and the experience accumulated for the child to learn how to get where he wants.

Most of us become so accustomed to going where we want that it is reflexive. A person that wants an education goes to school. The person that wants money gets a job. The person that wants companionship gets married. The things we have to do to get us from point A to point B define our “walk”. Without the Lord our motives for going through life follow the desires of the flesh.

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, - Ephesians 4:17

The motives and purposes of the unregenerate mind influenced by the flesh is called “vanity” or emptiness. A different “walk” requires something else in mind than vanity. This is where the “renewal” of the mind comes into play.

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. - Romans 6:4

The newness of life and the renewal of our mind create new destinations for our walk. For example, walking in the flesh often places an emphasis on ends or objectives. The renewed mind begins to see how something is done (means) also as important as where one is going (ends). The fleshly mind might not see any reason to restrain acting on lusts and desires. The renewed mind may take in a broader understanding of consequence and a greater sensitivity to harm caused to others.

SO, SINCE Christ suffered in the flesh for us, for you, arm yourselves with the same thought and purpose [patiently to suffer rather than fail to please God]. For whoever has suffered in the flesh [having the mind of Christ] is done with [intentional] sin [has stopped pleasing himself and the world, and pleases God], So that he can no longer spend the rest of his natural life living by [his] human appetites and desires, but [he lives] for what God wills. - 1 Peter 4:1-2 AMP

Like a child whose initial stumbling gains him the experience upon which bolder steps are taken, the Christian who attempts to walk by the Spirit may find he also stumbles. However, each attempt builds a foundation from which more steady progress can be made.

There was a dating reality TV show where a young man said that he wanted to refrain from fornication and keep himself pure for marriage. The other contestants could not contain their contempt and mockery of him because in their mind the act of denying whatever pleasure one could experience was the height of foolishness. This is an example of how completely alien the mind of a Christian is from those in the flesh.

We should consider the example of casual fornication that the world seems to consider as having value. The mind of the flesh is not able to see value beyond immediate sensations. Having a renewed mind can perceive the value of chastity because it is the foundation from which real true intimacy grows between a husband and wife giving a marriage the strength to survive a lifetime. Being able to see the value of this helps the Christian walking by the Spirit to consider casual fornication not only as valueless, but as destructive to the life he would have for himself.

God has provided all sorts of assistance to one who would walk by the Spirit.

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. - James 1:5

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. - Psalm 119:105

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. - Psalm 119:9

We see that God is the source of wisdom. We can also see that immersion in God's word cleanses and guides us. It is recommended that one's first attempts to walk by the Spirit begin with continuing prayer for wisdom and a hunger to know God through his word.

An additional prerequisite to walking by the Spirit is clarifying one's faith. Many of us think that believing in Jesus is a simple matter of acknowledging he once existed.

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. - James 2:19

Faith might better be considered as trusting more than believing.

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. - Proverbs 3:5-6

The Lord provides guidance in the path we walk. Like an infant that holds on to his parent's finger as he takes his first steps, our Christian walk needs to be taken with just such trusting dependence on our heavenly father.

Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee. - Psalm 143:8

Unlike a child, we never reach a point where we are independent from the reliance on our father for our walk. A “step” in our spiritual walk is pretty much anything we think to do or say. Our words and actions should be selected for how well they serve the purposes of God as opposed to how well they serve selfish interests.

Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. - Romans 6:13

God shows us what steps to take through a process of resonance. The closer we come to him, the more certain we are of what he desires for us. We can come closer through knowledge we gain through his word, fervent prayer, humility, and crying out for wisdom.

And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? - Luke 24:32

Chapter 12 - Taking a Wrong Turn

And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. - Revelation 2:3-4

The letter to the Galatians was written to an entire group that was taking a “wrong turn”. Here the Ephesians also had started to become inert. We can see in the life of King David an early passionate love of the Lord only to see later in life he became so distant from the Lord that he had a man killed so he could have his wife.

When he was young David was on the run trying to save his life because King Saul wanted him dead. That intensity of experience is reflected in many of his Psalms. However, after he was king and lived long in comfort, he lost his passion. As the voice of the Lord became more distant, he acted more and more in accordance with his own fleshly thinking. He, his family, and his country paid for such dereliction.

For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. - Psalm 73:27

We first begin to get off track when we no longer see or acknowledge God in our routine daily thoughts. Slowly the busyness of our routine masks the reality of God’s presence, provision, and protection. We create a vacuum that begins to be filled with fleshly concerns and desires.

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. - Galatians 5:13-16

Someone who becomes seduced by the desire for riches or inflated with a sense of self-sufficiency can be taken so far off track, there is little hope of returning. Since we all are vulnerable to being deflected from the path the Spirit would have us walk, maintaining a humble heart is critical to detecting when we have deviated.

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. - Luke 21:34

If we examine ourselves in truth, we can begin to see where we fall short and how we might recover.

I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. - Psalm 119:59

A man might walk past a rope and see it as clutter or an inconvenience. In a different circumstance, for example when he was downing, he might see the same rope in a much more favorable light. The things we value determine the direction in which we walk.

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. - Matthew 6:21

Since the industrial revolution modern life has become increasingly hectic. A day can become so filled with “necessary” activities that less and less attention is given to eternal matters. We seldom come to a point where specifically we decide our best interest lies in a walk away from God. Our diversion is usually subtle and almost indiscernible

A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. - Galatians 5:9

Chapter 13 - Getting Back on Track

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. - Colossians 3:16

Much of the advice for getting back on the path the Spirit would have us walk is the same as how we would avoid getting off track in the first place. If negligence is our first mistake, diligence would be a sound remedy as well as preventative precaution.

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. - Proverbs 4:23

Peter uses the word “diligence” to begin the description of an additive process for building a solid Christian life.

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. - 2 Peter 1:5-9

If we have let our diligence slip it may be because our flesh is reasserting itself. There really is no

“neutral” gear in the Christian life. We are either growing closer to our Lord or further away. Getting back on track is a little easier than an initial attempt to walk by the Spirit. Once we have had a “taste” of the joy, love, and peace to be found in a closer walk with the Lord, it can be used to motivate us to renew our seeking after the Lord.

The problem with the flesh is that God fades from our perception. We see usually only our own effort and activity and thoughts of God can become so distant as to be non-existent.

A Song of degrees for Solomon. Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. - Psalm 127:1

Getting back on track or even starting to walk by the Spirit initially requires a renewed mind continuously filling a heart with that which is valuable and emptying it of that which is not.

Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: - Proverbs 3:3

Our heart is a repository of what we value and carries within it the momentum of our life. The flesh often reasserts itself through our heart.

O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. - Matthew 12:34

The mind can be employed as a gatekeeper of the heart. If foolish, shameful, or even hurtful things come out of our heart, a renewed mind can identify them and tag them for abandonment.

Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed. - Psalm 119:80

The mind can also be employed in an active sense to direct the heart to be filled with that which is of value.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. - Philippians 4:8

In addition to the internal things we can do to get back on track, the value of godly friends should not be overlooked. In Alcoholics Anonymous a new member is paired with an older member who acts as their sponsor. AA understands the difficulty of attempting a new walk in life and the difficulty to keeping to that path. The Christian first attempting to walk by the Spirit or return to that walk can likewise benefit from an older wiser Christian who clearly shows the love and light of Jesus in their life.

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. - Galatians 6:2

A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. - Psalm 17:17

Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. - Proverbs 27:17

And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. - Romans 15:14

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. - Ephesians 4:32

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. - Colossians 3:16

Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. - 1 Thessalonians 5:11

But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. - Hebrews 3:13

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. - Hebrews 10:24-25

No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. - 1 John 4:12

Chapter 12 - Walking as the former owner of our life

As corporations buy up and take over businesses, it is not uncommon to find a former business owner kept on as an employee of the corporation to run his former business. It can be difficult for the new employee to adjust to his subordinate position. His freedom to do whatever he wanted has been replaced with the constraints of someone else.

The Christian life can seem similarly restrictive especially when seen from a legalistic perspective (no smoking, dancing, playing cards, or drinking). However, the Christian who surrenders his life to be led by the Holy Spirit often finds that the financial and health expenses of smoking to be unrewarding, the frantic and loud environment of clubs to be un-inviting, the financial vicissitudes of gambling to be risky, and the need for the stupor inducing effects of alcohol to be no longer felt.

Strip yourselves of your former nature [put off and discard your old unrenewed self] which characterized your previous manner of life and becomes corrupt through lusts and desires that spring from delusion; - Ephesians 4:22 AMP

Walking by the Spirit is an eye-opening transformation. As we begin to receive and understand truth, we begin to see how shabby our former lives were. We can see how the inclinations of the flesh actually harm us and the brief pleasurable sensations that are sought not only do not build anything lasting, they often create a more painful future.

And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? - Luke 24:30-32

In addition to the new understanding we have of the undesirability of life in the flesh, we also begin to feel the pull of the desirability of a closer walk with God.

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, - Philippians 3:7-8

When we were distant from God, even if we weren't given over to a flood of dissipation, we sought to secure our lives, family, property, and future as best we could. The example of Abraham and Isaac is a good one to illustrate the walk of faith in God contrasted with a walk serving ourselves.

And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. ... And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. - Genesis 22:2 & 5

Here we can see that Abraham had confidence that both he and his son would return. This testifies to a faith that places all confidence in the Lord to set the course of our lives. We may not understand why or how things are working out. However, we need not be anxious.

And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ. - 2 Thessalonians 3:5

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. - Romans 8:28

We are not in the best position to decide the destination or even course of our lives.

There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. - Proverbs 16:25

Our lives become much better when we relinquish control to him who died for us and loves us.

A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. - Psalm 23:1-3

The closer we walk with the Lord by his Spirit, the more we come to understand and appreciate his guiding hand. We need to let go of the fears and desires that drove us through life so that we can rest in the peace that trusting in God produces.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. - Matthew 11:28-30

The subject of free will has been debated for centuries. However, it boils down to a choice between the flesh and the Spirit. God has given us a free choice. However, we can see that our choices almost always tend toward selfishness and harm us in the long run. It is this destructive inclination of the flesh that gives the appearance of free will. In reality we are its slaves;

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? - Romans 6:16

It is when we come to faith in Jesus and receive freedom from the compulsive nature of the flesh, that we begin to have actual free will.

Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. - 2 Corinthians 3:17

However, it is all too often that we use this freedom to drift back to the flesh and become inert in our Christian life.

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. - Galatians 5:13

Walking by the Spirit entails an almost constant mental assessment of our thoughts words and deeds. We need to employ our minds to identify our motives in the cold light of truth. Our sinful nature wants to reassert itself and retake control of our life. Our old nature seldom presents itself in open rebellion, often it employs subtle and incremental influence. Like the former business owner who comes to start making decisions as if he were back in charge, we can find we have neglected our seeking after the Lord and have begun to chart our own course.

A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps. - Proverbs 16:9

In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. - Proverbs 3:6

Chapter 13 - Summary

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. - Romans 8:4

The subject of walking by the Spirit of God is one that is difficult because it encompasses more than a simple single action. It is even difficult to describe as a process. However, one might consider the developmental stages of the walk of a Christian and begin to see a pattern that describes how one might follow the path set out for us by the Holy Spirit.

The first step would be to become a born again Christian.

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. - John 3:5

The next step would be to escape the clutches of those who would direct us into paths that quench the Spirit. Both environments of legalism and liberalism cater to the flesh and can halt our spiritual journey.

Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. - Mark 7:7

But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. - Galatians 4:9-10

Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? - Colossians 2:20-22

We also need to extract ourselves from those “Christian” associations which are inclined towards the flesh.

But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? - 1 Corinthians 5:12

But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. - Titus 3:9

Once a Christian has avoided or extricated himself from the many corruptive and deadening traps he can encounter, the next step is to search for those from whom the spiritual path can be learned (presumably from those older wiser Christians who show such maturity in their lives).

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. - Colossians 3:1

The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. - Titus 2:4

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. - Hebrews 5:12

There is the expectation for Christian growth and maturity such that one is able to teach others. However the Christian life and walking by the Spirit is not information or a technique that is learned. Rather it is a reflection of ones entire life. For this reason fellowship with other believers who are also active, seeking, and growing in Christ is essential.

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; - Ephesians 4:1-4

Walking by the Spirit might be summarized as;

1. Trusting in Jesus for salvation.
2. Avoiding pigeonholed or dead-end Christianity.
3. Actively seeking the deeper things of the Lord.
4. Finding an older wiser Christian who can teach.
5. Starving the flesh.
6. Feeding on the things of the Spirit.
7. Growing into the image of Christ.

In addition to the weakness of our own sinful nature in the flesh, modern man also faces the difficulties of having a societal (worldly) imprint from his youngest days. We all have an imprint on our character that cripples us by the media and institutional driven consumerism pervasive throughout our society.

Modern life is also hectic in ways that could not be appreciated by those who lived before the industrial revolution. This frantic pace often keeps us from turning to spiritual matters. In addition, the increasing level of collectivism weaves to even closer association with those who not only live in the flesh, but are hostile to those who would seek after Christ.

Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals. - 1 Corinthians 15:33

Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God. - James 4:4

The importance of true Christian fellowship is critical to be able to walk by the Spirit. However, it is very hard to even find anyone who has the time or interest for any kind of relationship, much less someone who has escaped the spiritual traps Satan has built into the world and is being led by the Spirit to maturity themselves.

Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. - Matthew 5:14

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. - John 3:19

Satan sets the course for this world (for now). He has crippled families both in breadth and depth and used his educational and media systems to inculcate generations of increasingly compliant people to be cogs in his social machinery. He uses people to form the collectives he needs to leverage his influence over the world. He has instituted superficial collegiality rather than deeper personal relationships to provide a substitute social “glue” to connect people to function in the artificial environment he has created.

Considering our own internal fleshly inclinations, the consumptive orientation of the modern world and its pace, and the influence of the people around us who are rapidly becoming hostile to Christianity, it is difficult to see how we can resist such powerful influences. One trick to use is fasting. Our hunger reflex is like an automatic timer calling us to eat. We can use this facility as a reminder to pray. It is like programming our body (ironically the flesh) to remind us to pray regardless of our circumstance or location.

The Christian who seeks to walk after the Spirit faces opposition from an intense social current similar

to the power of an ocean tide to sweep away anything attempting to resist its influence. Walking in the Spirit begins with truth and humility. As truth floods into our lives, it can be depressing to see how sad the world really is once it is stripped of its facade.

And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. - Ecclesiastes 1:13-15

If we were to remain focused on the evil in the world, we would become vulnerable to pride, thinking ourselves immune or superior.

Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. - 1 Corinthians 6:10-11

Being able to see the truth about ourselves is the key to humility. However, if we were to only stop at this point we would be doubly depressed understanding the scope of the evil both in the world and ourselves.

O soul, are you weary and troubled?
No light in the darkness you see?
There's light for a look at the Savior,
And life more abundant and free.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.

The remedy is to recognize that there is hope. Jesus offered his life to redeem us. We have assurance that no matter how bad the circumstances, the Lord will not abandon us.

When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up. - Psalm 27:10

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. - Matthew 28:20