

Defeating the Desires of the Flesh

Galatians 5

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In this study we are going to look at Galatians 5 and defeating the desires of the flesh. How do you defeat the desires of the flesh? I have been praying all week that the Lord would bring those people who are struggling with the desires of the flesh so it's good to see all of you. Reality is that we all struggle or battle with the desires of the flesh, the things of this world. One of those things I do hate in life are those awkward conversations we have, those awkward moments you get into, specifically those times I'm in over my head and I agree along the way as if I know what they are talking about and then somewhere near the end I'm supposed to apply something that they said during that conversation.

My youngest son a couple of years ago took up soccer. I did not grow up playing soccer or watching it but there is one thing I really do love about soccer and that's my son Ben. That is about it but I do love Ben. He took up soccer and he came home saying all these terms they used. I nodded, agreed and memorized some of the terms as if I could understand what he was saying. He was talking about banana kicks and indirect free kicks and the onion net. I thought it was called a goal. He talked about the cross, the chip, the through pass, the play on which basically means the ref doesn't know what he's doing so you just play on. He was talking about a four two, a four two three, a four two four and I see some of you don't know what I'm talking about either. I'm just nodding along and then I go to my first soccer game to watch him play. Someone was yelling "Get your mark" and I'm thinking "How did you know the guy's name was Mark?" I have no idea what I'm supposed to be doing or watching and so I start throwing out terms just to have fun and everybody is laughing at me so I finally pulled someone who knew about soccer off to the side and asked them to give me good terms and how to use them. He said to me "No, just cheer for you son." He knew I was going to pick up on those terms quickly even though knowing those terms would have been helpful.

We have a car that's in the shop. We get this phone call from the mechanic and he starts talking about the transmission. He uses terms like planet gears, sealing rings and lip seal. There's a lip seal on a transmission? How do you do that? That sounds like an envelope to me. There are pan gaskets and cyclinoids. When he said "overhaul" I said "That sounds expensive!" I don't know what any of those terms mean and here I am nodding all along through this conversation.

At the end of it I'm saying "how much?" If I knew the terms I would know if the cost was a good deal or a bad deal yet I have no idea what he's talking about. So how much is it going to cost at the end of the day? It's helpful to know those terms and it could save me some money for sure but I'm not going to take the time to learn all those terms just to save that money. It's really not worth it to me.

Yet just a couple of weeks ago my youngest daughter, Mary, was sumo wrestling. Those of you who know Mary know that she's not quite built for sumo wrestling. But she was sumo wrestling at a fun little party and fell and got a concussion. We took her down to the hospital and we're talking with the doctors. They start going through their terms and I had to write these down. There was hypermnesia and hypomnesia. I know of amnesia but I didn't know there was hyper or hypo. There was antograde and retrograde and hemispherical damage. When I think of the hemisphere I think of enormous things. Hemispherical damage sounds terrible. I want to know if she's going to live. Then they throw out cognitive reconstruction and I say "timeout, you're not going to do any reconstruction on my little girl. You're not touching her with a knife." The doctor looked at me with a funny look and began to explain that cognitive reconstruction is you just ask questions to help them with their memory. Once again there are terms I've heard but I don't know what they mean but when it comes to my daughter you can have my car but now I realize I need to know what these terms are even if they are simple to some people. Those professionals are always gracious to try and explain those terms to us to see if we can understand them.

The same thing happens in Scripture to me. There are certain phrases in Scripture that at first glance seem simple enough. When I was a little kid I was bewildered as to what it meant to ask Jesus into your heart. I'm such a realist that I didn't know what that meant. From a very practical standpoint how do you ask Jesus into your heart? I thought of the physical organ in your body that blood went through. How would you ask Him? Do you know where He is? How do you talk to Him? I was perplexed and too embarrassed to ask questions when I was young to try and figure that out. I didn't know what it meant to be washed by the blood and didn't think I needed to know what it meant to be washed by the blood.

You stumble upon different phrases in Scripture in this Galatians 5 there is a phrase that I look at and for years I would think I understood what it meant and then finally just had to say "Okay I don't know what that means. I don't know how you do that." The phrase is a simple one. The phrase is 'walk by the Spirit.' For years I would nod while in sermons or small group Bible studies or Sunday school thinking absolutely you have to walk by the Spirit. I would have no idea when I'd leave. What does it practically look like to walk by the Spirit? So I want to take time in this study to dive into this passage and a couple of others and see if we can't get a real practical understanding of what it means for us as believers, children of God, to actually walk in the Spirit because I would suggest to you that it is critical that we understand that. It's not just helpful. It's not just beneficial but

it's critical that we understand what it means to walk in the Spirit. So let's look at Galatians 5. Galatians 5:1-6 says

1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. 2 Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. 3 I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. 4 You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. 5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

He is trying to point out this example to them of living by the Law or living by Christ. Then he goes on to say in Galatians 5:7-25,

7 You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? 8 This persuasion is not from him who calls you. 9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump. 10 I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. 11 But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. 12 I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves! 13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. 16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

In the midst of taking on this particular issue which I'm not here to try and take on the issue of circumcision but he puts before them a couple of bullets as it relates to walking by the Spirit and not gratifying the desires of the flesh. He starts out

this passage in Galatians 5:1 by saying *“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.”* Now let’s look at Romans 6 which gives reference to this concept when he says “do not submit yourself again to a yoke of slavery.” Romans 6:6 says *“We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.”* In other words, when we become a Christian we are no longer enslaved to sin. He goes on to say in Romans 6:7-14, 17-18,

7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. 14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. 17 But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

So he is saying that we were a slave to sin as an unbeliever and upon hearing the Gospel, submitting and surrendering you life to the Lord, putting your complete faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation, at that moment you were no longer a slave to sin. You will still sin but you are no longer a slave to sin. Sin no longer had that dominion that power over you. It still creeps at your door but it does not control you. You are not enslaved by that. He goes on to say that not only are you not enslaved to sin but now you are enslaved to righteousness. There is no middle ground. Either as an unbeliever you are enslaved to sin and you can do nothing but sin or as a believer you’re now enslaved to righteousness. My mind would say that I have a dilemma. I understand easily being enslaved to sin. I’ve lived that. I get that. I have now been set free from being enslaved to sin and I’m told now that I’m a slave to righteousness but being enslaved to sin which is easy to understand, I’m not sure I’d look at my life and say I’m enslaved to righteousness. In other words, to the same degree am I enslaved to righteousness as I was to sin? So there is this dilemma that gets put before us.

The reason He says you’re enslaved to righteousness is because you have the Holy Spirit living within you. That’s your enslavement. There is a yoke upon us. Everyone has a yoke upon them. The question is what’s on the other side of the yoke? If sin is on the other side of the yoke, if you’re not a believer then you’re

enslaved to sin. If you remove that sin from your life the only way to do that is to be yoked to Christ. If you are therefore yoked to Christ He says you now have the Spirit living inside of you. So now as a believer you are enslaved to righteousness.

Let's look back at Galatians 5:1b which says "*do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*" In other words, don't submit again back to those sinful desires and those sinful passions in which you once lived. Galatians 5:13 says "*For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh...*" He is going to explain further that we have these desires of the flesh. Do not give yourselves over again to the desires of the flesh because Christ died so that you would no longer be given over to that. He died so that you would no longer be enslaved to these desires of the flesh but the desires of the flesh are ever before us in this sinful world. As a matter of fact in I John God gives us a command. He says "Do not love the world or the things of the world." What are the things of the world? The very first category He gives to us is the desires of the flesh. Those are the things that are of this world.

You know what the desires of the flesh are. You could create your own list of the desires of the flesh. They are those things that are pulling you to take your eyes off of Jesus. There is the trap of enslavement that is trying to pull your eyes away from Jesus. Now in Galatians 5 He actually gives us a list and it begins to unfold in verse 19. He tells us the works of the flesh are evident and He will give us a list but don't miss the fact that the works of the flesh are evident. It is anything that draws your eyes away from Jesus. It is those things of the world. Here is His list. Galatians 5:19-21 says *19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.* In other words this is not a comprehensive list. It goes on, doesn't it?

The desires of the flesh are those things that would draw me away from honoring and glorifying God and they would make me fix my eyes upon myself. The desires of the flesh are me wanting to know what's going on in someone else's life that is none of my business. It is me wanting to know all the sorted details and all the sorted issues of what took place in some bad and dark situation because I just have this desire to know. That's a desire of the flesh. Those things aren't honorable. Those things are not pleasing to God. I don't need to know what those things are. A desire of the flesh is when someone comes along and says "Now that guy is really good at what he does" and my first thought is "What am I, chopped liver? Why would you compliment him and not me? If you look at the two of us you should start the compliments with me." When you think more highly of yourself than you do of others that is a desire of the flesh and a desire to control something. It's that desire of you wanting to make sure it works out the way you want it to work out which is a desire of your flesh. That's what keeps me from trusting God and makes me grab those reigns to control whatever that is in

my life. It is that desire to be promoted, recognized and to do anything of the world to fit in better with the world, to be well thought of with the world, to not be seen not as a fanatic or different than the world.

The desires of the flesh are categorically anything that are opposed to the Spirit and it says that right there in the passage. The desires of the flesh are those things that are in opposition to the Spirit. What is going on before us at any given moment in our life as believers is this constant battle that Galatians 5 says. The desires of the flesh, the things of this world are pulling us and keeping us from doing the things that we ought to do. Then there is the Holy Spirit that is at work in us trying to draw us to honoring and glorifying God.

The desires of the flesh are powerful. You have seen the desires of the flesh consume you and get you to do things you never thought you'd do. You have seen the desires of the flesh consume your brothers and sisters in Christ. You have seen the desires of the flesh consume other people and you watch the devastation that takes place. Do not deny the power of the desires of the flesh but know this. Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. Greater is the Holy Spirit living inside of you than the power of him who is in this world who is putting before you all the desires of the flesh. I'm not in any way suggesting that we should add this to that verse because I am not going to add to or take away from Scripture but I would say as a reminder that greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world (greater is he that is in the world than me by myself apart from the power of the Holy Spirit.)

Is it possible to defeat the desires of the flesh? If this study title was "Destroying the desires of the flesh" then somebody should take issue because we don't have that capability. In God's sovereignty He has chosen to allow that to continue in this fallen and broken world. You will need to take that up with Him when we all get to heaven and I'll sit and listen to His answer because I'm not asking. I don't know why He played it out that way but He did and in His sovereignty there are going to be desires of the flesh that continue in our life.

Are they too powerful for us? Are we able to defeat these or is life simply going to be characterized by a continuous failure in our walk with God, a continuous giving over to these desires of the flesh? How do we defeat them? It's easy, look at Galatians 5:16 which says "*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*" If you are ever looking for a straightforward verse, that's it. If you want to not gratify or defeat the desires of the flesh then walk by the Spirit. Let's sing a hymn and go home. That's it, right? The problem is, how do you do that? How do you walk by the Spirit? That's why I said I think it's critical for us to understand that. It's critical to understand how to walk by the Spirit because it's walking by the Spirit that allows us to defeat these desires of the flesh.

'Walk by the Spirit' is a phrase and there are similar other phrases in Scripture. There is 'walk by the Spirit', 'live by the Spirit', 'keep in step with the Spirit', or 'abide in the Spirit.' All of these phrases are in the same context. First of all in terms of how we do that we must not overlook the fact that you cannot walk in the Spirit you don't have. You cannot keep in step with the Spirit that is not in your life. There is but only one way that you have the indwelling Holy Spirit in you and that is, to completely and totally surrender your life to the Lord. I would suggest to you that one of the reasons, maybe one of the main reasons, possibly one of the primary reasons that so many people struggle to walk by the Spirit is because they have never surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ. They have tried to walk with God in their own mind in terms of the way they would develop it but they have never really surrendered themselves completely to the Lordship of Jesus Christ therefore He does not know them as He says to us in Scripture.

So if you find you have that struggle to walk in the Spirit and to do those things that God would honor then I do think it warrants all of us to ask ourselves have I completely and totally surrendered my life to Jesus Christ? Am I completely trusting in His death, in His becoming sin for me or am I trying to trust in that and trust in what I've done a little bit and lean on my own record in a sense? In Ephesians 1 He declares to us that if we put our complete trust in Him He will grant to us that Spirit. In Ezekiel 36:26- 27 He says *26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause (by the power of the Spirit) you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.* The Lord says when you become a Christian He will place His Spirit within us but it requires us to trust Him alone for our salvation.

So as a believer then, how is it that we walk in the Spirit? It's not something where the Spirit is dormant in our life and we have to do something to cause Him to act. The Spirit doesn't wait for you in order for Him to be at work in your life. The Spirit doesn't mirror you, you mirror the Spirit. That's part of our problem. If anyone would come after Me, Christ says, he must first deny himself. God doesn't give us the Holy Spirit so that the Spirit can mirror what you do. The Spirit doesn't follow us. The Scripture doesn't say 'get the Spirit to keep in step with you,' it says you are to keep in step with the Spirit. You are to mirror the Spirit.

When I was a little boy I used to love going to my grandparents farm. My grandparents were Godly people and my grandfather was a farmer. I believed at that time and even today I'd make a good argument that a farmer was the noblest occupation anyone could have because my grandfather had it. Therefore to me that was better than being king of the world. My grandfather had long legs and was probably six two and I used to literally try to step in his footsteps in the pasture. My brother and I would trail and follow him but the problem was he woke the chickens up and told them to wake everybody else up. He fed the cows before breakfast. The farmer beats the Army guy up. The farmer gets the rest of the world going. He eats breakfast and then works hard all day. He stops for a

bite of lunch and then works until the sun goes down. When the sun goes down he goes to sleep and that's why he is so Godly. Think about that. I tried to mirror and do everything possible that he could do and I just couldn't as a little boy. He would love to watch me try to do that. I was going to be there for the week and by the end of the first day I was literally paralyzed. I couldn't walk the second day or get out of bed because I was exhausted in trying to keep up with him.

What God calls us to do is to mirror what the Holy Spirit is doing. He has placed the Holy Spirit in our life and He says "Okay Bruce you keep in step with the Spirit." I say "I will God but what does the Spirit do?" When I wake up in the morning what is the Spirit doing? Go back and look at what Jesus said to the disciples. He said, "it is good that I go away because if I do not go away the Promised One, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, will not come." Jesus began to lay out for them in John 14 some of the things the Holy Spirit does. He said that the Holy Spirit would teach you all things. The Holy Spirit will remind you of all truth and grant you peace in your life. He will point you to Jesus in every possible situation. He will convict you of sin and remind you of judgment. He will speak what has been given to Him and only what has been given to Him. He will continuously worship God.

So how is it that I keep in step or abide or walk in the Spirit? We do what He does. The Holy Spirit loves God. He grants to us a love for God. The Holy Spirit loves the Word of God. He only speaks that which is given to Him. We are supposed to mirror the Holy Spirit. What if we only spoke that which was given to us? Is that what He is saying to us when He says 'only let the things that come out of your mouth be honoring to the Lord'? We are to speak the Word of God to other people. We are to communicate the truth of God's Word to other people. The Holy Spirit is constantly pointing us to Jesus. As we are trying to mirror and do everything the Holy Spirit does the Holy Spirit in a sense is a mirror. He is pointing you to Jesus for salvation, for sanctification, for modeling, for mentoring, and for discipling. He is constantly pointing you to Jesus and therefore we're to mirror that.

So I need to say "God, help me be a better parent. Help me be a better father to my children." I want to walk in the Spirit to be a better father. So how do I do that? Do what the Holy Spirit does in your life, point them to Jesus. Constantly point your children to Jesus and remind them of all Truth. Teach them and give them understanding of the Word of God. That's part of what it means for us to walk in the Spirit. It is to do the things that the Holy Spirit does in our life. If you want to be effective in walking in the Spirit you have to go into the Scripture. Go to John 15 and Galatians 5 and learn about the Spirit. You have to learn about who the Spirit is and understand not what the world says about the Spirit but what does the Word say about the Spirit and mimic and mirror what He does in that.

What helps me to walk in the Spirit? That's easy. It is doing what the Spirit loves. How do I abide in the Spirit? I do what the Spirit loves. What does the Spirit love? The Spirit loves Jesus, love God, loves to talk about Jesus, loves to point people to Jesus, loves to remind people of Jesus, loves the time spent with the Lord and therefore by the power of the Holy Spirit I spend time with the Lord. I spend time doing things that the Lord enjoys doing. That's what a love relationship is, right? Say to your spouse "I love you" but don't ever do what they want. Don't ever do the things that they cherish doing and it's not going to go very far. Eventually they will say "Do you really love me? You say you do but I want to do this and you don't ever want to do that. You don't want to engage in the things that I do."

The Spirit wants us to pray. The Spirit intercedes on our behalf and so as we keep in step with the Spirit we pray continuously. If you need help on that get a copy of last Sunday night's sermon that Benny Youngblood did on praying continuously, having a life of prayer and being committed to prayer for that is abiding in the Spirit. Be submissive in the Spirit in that prayer so that I have the freedom to offer up to God all my dreams, desires, and wants while at the same time submitting the whole time to the will of God and asking the Spirit to do what He says He will do, interpreting those dreams and desires to the will of God. The Spirit prays as God so we pray as God in private worship, corporate worship and in conversation with other people we praise God. We give glory to Him.

The Spirit loves obedience. The Spirit is convicting us of sin and of righteousness. He loves obedience therefore we should love obedience, not the minimal obedience or the obedience of just doing the bare minimum of what God puts before us but we love obedience regardless of what God tells us to do. We love to obey no matter what the issue is because the Spirit loves to obey. We are looking for things in God's Word when we are reading it. We are not trying to avoid the commands of God we are trying to embrace the commands of God. If you are walking in the Spirit then your motives and your thoughts and your desires as it relates to the Word of God and as it relates to obedience would sound something like Psalm 119. If you were walking in the Spirit then you would cherish the Word the way the Spirit led the Psalmist to say "Thy Word I love, Thy Word I have hidden in my heart" and you would love, embrace and desire above all things to get into the Word of God.

You would want to learn and study the Word of God because you know the Spirit wants to *remind* you of all truth. He can only remind me of that which has been put into me. He is going to instruct me but He can only remind me of that which has been put into me so I dive into the Word of God not knowing at what point the application will come. I dive into the Word of God asking Him to remind me of that Word of God. Those are the things that help us walk in the Spirit.

There is really only one thing that hinders our walk with God. In Ephesians 4:30 it says "*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*" What is it that grieves the Holy Spirit? Sin grieves the Holy

Spirit. Confessed, forgiven sin? No. Is the Holy Spirit grieved by my past sins that have been covered by the blood of Christ? Is the Holy Spirit hindered in my walk with Him because of what has already been acknowledged as sin, what has already been confessed as sin, what has already been paid for? Absolutely not, the Holy Spirit is not the one keeping the old record against us, so what sin is it that actually grieves the Holy Spirit that in a sense hinders the Holy Spirit or allows us to be hindered by it? It is our sin that is un-confessed, not acknowledged and not dealt with. We have that command in Scripture that we are to put to death those deeds of the flesh and the Spirit works with us to be able to do that.

How do we effectively deal with sin so as not to grieve the Holy Spirit? Years ago someone gave me an illustration and I want to share this illustration with you. This is a simple and silly illustration but this illustration has always stuck with me to try to help me understand how it is that I deal with this sin that is in my life so that I don't live a life of grieving the Holy Spirit. Here's how it works. There are three terms that I would memorize – abandon, appropriate and abide. I want to abandon the sin that is in my life. I want to appropriate my relationship with God – make it right and useful again for the purpose it was designed to appropriate and then to abide in the Holy Spirit.

When the Holy Spirit is at work in my life it says the Holy Spirit is going to remind me of all truth, point me to Jesus and will convict me of sin. So let's say this paper towel roll is the pathway of communication between the Holy Spirit and myself. That's a stretch for some of us I know but stay with me here because I love children. This paper towel roll is a communication device between the Holy Spirit and myself so when I pull out on 280 and one of you pulls out in front of me then my initial thought would be that I would be inclined towards a desire of the flesh. So you pull out in front of me and the Holy Spirit very simply says "Bruce, don't say anything that is unholy or unrighteous but only that which is useful for the building up of others." I say "That's a good idea. I heard that clearly. I don't want to do it. I'm not going to curse you. I'm not going to get frustrated. I'm not going to take my eyes off of You and I'm not going to act in anger."

Let's say I don't agree with that and I'm a little bit selfish today so I push that sin into that communication between me and the Holy Spirit. I decided I'm not going to confess that sin and so then the phone rings. It's that person on the phone. I look at that and I'm not going to answer it. I'm tired of them and I don't want to minister to them. I don't want to deal with them or talk with them. The Holy Spirit says "Bruce you are called to minister to that person." I kind of understood what the Holy Spirit was saying but not exactly and now I'm a little confused. I didn't hear it quite as clearly as when you pulled out in front of me on 280 and so I ignore that too. I take that sin and now that's just more sin that I'm pushing down into my life.

I get to work and I walk in and one of the guys I work with comes up to me and says "Hey we have a problem because that thing you told me to do two weeks ago I never did and now it's a mess." Now I have to clean it up. Now I don't have a clue what the Holy Spirit just said to me so what happens now is I do not respond well to that person. Now for the rest of the day when something happens I don't hear much from the Spirit. Has the Holy Spirit gone anywhere? No, but what happens is I have un-confessed sin in my life and it's keeping me from hearing clearly the conviction of sin or the Scripture that He is trying to remind me of or that I'm to be pointed back to Jesus and so this is eventually called a hardened and calloused heart. Now when you see it in your own life or you see in someone else's life that you believe they are a Christian, it doesn't seem like they hear the Holy Spirit at all. I promise you the Holy Spirit is still communicating but because of all this sin in our life we are not able to hear, be sensitive to or respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

So what do we do? God has to get our attention. Then God has to bring us down to our knees. God has to use other forms of conviction in our life. Now instead of that gentle, still small voice of the Spirit, someone has to come hit me upside the head. Something will have to happen in my life now to get my attention from the Lord so that I will begin to recognize and say "Wait a minute, do I have un-confessed sin in my life?" Then I would be able to acknowledge and confess that sin and simply claim the forgiveness which He has offered through His Son our Savior. Then I could continue on from that.

Here is what is going to happen. You will pull out in front of me again but when you do I hear clearly from the Holy Spirit. Here is my dilemma. I don't know what tomorrow will bring. I hope that the worst temptation I have tomorrow is you pulling out in front of me on 280 but I doubt it. I hope the worst temptation I have is that person who calls just to complain but I doubt it. Therefore it is critical that I keep in step with the Spirit, abide in the Spirit, continue to acknowledge and confess that sin.

The mark of spiritual maturity is not how much you sin. The mark of spiritual maturity is how quickly and appropriately you deal with that sin. You abandon that sin physically, you get away from it. You abandon that sin emotionally, you move your mind from it by consuming it with Christ. You abandon that sin spiritually, you move yourself away from the thing that God told you not to do and embrace the thing God told you to do. There is only one way for you to appropriate you being in sin and that is confession. It is acknowledgement that it is sin, agreeing with it before the Lord and confessing it before Him. Then claiming that forgiveness that God offers to us and then you abide. Dive back into His Word. You memorize passages of Scripture that deal with that reoccurring temptation or that reoccurring desire of the flesh.

Here is what I would love to know. I wish that all of us could see our passage way that somehow God would just show us what is there because maybe the

struggles we are having in our life are because we have un-confessed sin in our life. Maybe we are grieving the Holy Spirit and while we feel like God is far from us, He is not. He is shouting by the power of the Holy Spirit in our life but our un-confessed sin is hindering that communication in our life. I don't know whether it is or not but I want to give you an opportunity to tell the Lord. Ask the Lord to show you your heart and to show you if there is any un-confessed in your life you need to confess. Lord, help me to specifically acknowledge it and that I would be able to abandon that and confess it. So that we would all leave here hearing clearly and loudly the leading of the Holy Spirit, the conviction of the Holy Spirit, the reminding of the Truth and giving us a desire and a passion for those things that He loves. He loves His Lord, Jesus, and the Word of God. He loves prayer and communication with God.

Please take this time to ask the Lord silently to reveal this to you.

Prayer:

Lord, reveal any un-confessed sin in my life. Help me to hear clearly what you want to reveal to me and help me to walk in Your Truth. Thank You for forgiving me of my sins. Lead me in the way everlasting, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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