

Intimacy with Christ Through Deeper Abiding – Part 2

Walking in the Spirit: Living by His Power Instead of Our Own

1. Brief recap from last meetings.

Last time we focused on **intentional abiding** in Christ and studied **Jas. 4:7-10 (NKJV)**. We saw the clear progression in this passage:

humility → surrender → cleansing → repentance → humility

beginning and ending with humility before the Lord.

We discussed “drawing near” in **Jas. 4:8** and wrestled with this question: *How can we draw near to Someone who already lives inside us through His Spirit, and how can God draw near to us when He is already as close as He can possibly be?* * Read fuller context: **Jas. 4:7-10**.

This naturally led us to the key distinction between **Union** and **Communion** with Christ:

- **Union** is our permanent position in Christ the moment we are born again.
- **Communion** is our ongoing, daily relationship with Him as we abide in Him.

We summed it up like this: *God never moves away from us, but the more we intentionally draw near to Him, the more deeply and intimately we experience His nearness.*

We also explored what **true humility** and **true repentance** really mean. Repentance isn’t just saying “I’m sorry” — it’s a voluntary realignment of our entire life under God’s authority.

We also discussed how sin, busyness, or self-reliance can create relational distance and hinder fellowship — yet daily abiding restores and deepens our nearness to God.

The progression we talked about in our last meeting leads to walking in the Spirit (walking in step with the Spirit). This is where we are now heading with this study.

Humility → surrender → cleansing → repentance → humility → Drawing near → **Walking in The Spirit**

2. Living by the Spirit vs. Walking in the Spirit/Keeping in Step with the Spirit (important subtle differences)

- a) **“Live by the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5, 13; Gal.5:25 NLT/AMPC)** – (Our Indwelling power source)
 - The Holy Spirit’s presence in every believer is a permanent state of being — a positional reality that comes from our union with Christ. The moment we are born again, the Spirit regenerates us, giving us new life, and He takes up residence inside us forever. He is the Spirit of Christ, which means “Christ in us” is now possible. Christ in us is our new identity; the Holy Spirit is our constant power source, actively conforming us to the image of Jesus.

- Because the Spirit already dwells in us 24/7, we face a daily choice: we can live by His power or fall back into self-reliance and live according to the flesh. We can choose flesh-powered obedience (which quickly becomes religion and striving) or Spirit-led obedience (which is a living relationship). Paul gives us these clear choices in the ESV:
 - *“Those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5).*
 - *“If you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” (Rom. 8:13).*
 - *“If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25).*
- Each statement is an invitation: we can make the less wise choice of working things out in our own strength, or we can yield to the Holy Spirit.

**See Rom. 8:13 commentary below regarding spiritual death.*

b) **“Walking in the Spirit/Keeping in Step with the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16, 25 ESV/AMPC)**

A continuous, daily decision (daily obedience / practical conduct / communion & abiding).

- This ties the two together: John Wesley's Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible (1765) *“If we live by the Spirit — If we are indeed raised from the dead, and are alive to God, by the operation of His Spirit. Let us walk by the Spirit — Let us follow his guidance, in all our tempers, thoughts, words, and actions.”* (on **Gal. 5:25**)
- **Gal. 5:25** *“If we live by the [Holy] Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit (AMPC)”, “If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit (ESV)”, “Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives (NLT).”*
- Both *‘walking by the Spirit’ (Gal. 5:16)* and *‘keeping in step with the Spirit’ (Gal. 5:25)* refer to living a life under the daily guidance and empowering of the Holy Spirit.
- **How do we practically do this? How do we let/allow the Holy Spirit to guide our lives?**
- Intentionally abiding in Christ (**Jn. 15:4-5**) discussed in previous studies is a big part of this.
- The progression we have been discussing in previous studies is also a big part of this:
- **Jas. 4:7-10** Humility → surrender → cleansing → repentance → humility → Drawing near
- All of this leads to → **living by the Spirit** (Christ in us being our new identity and the Holy Spirit being our power source) and **walking/keeping in step with the Spirit** (daily obedience and relying on the Holy Spirit’s guidance).
- Keeping in step with the Holy Spirit is a habitual lifestyle of dependence; it is the practice of **staying sensitive to His promptings, responding with quick obedience, and consistently yielding our own desires to His.**
- This is the command and the choice. *“Walk”* (Greek peripateō) means our everyday lifestyle and conduct. *“Keep in step”* (Greek stoicheō) is a military term — march in line, stay in rhythm, follow the leader’s pace without running ahead or lagging. (**Walk in union with.**)

These two realities — **living by the Spirit** (our indwelling power source) and **Walking in the Spirit/Keeping in Step with the Spirit** (our daily obedience) — are beautifully illustrated when we contrast life in the flesh with life in the Spirit and recognize the Holy Spirit as the very Spirit of Christ within us.

3. Living in the Flesh vs. Living in the Spirit and The Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ (These two concepts are closely tied together)

a) Living in the Flesh vs. In The Spirit/By the Spirit (ESV)

- **Gal. 3:3** – “... *Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”*
- **Zech. 4:6** – “*This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.*” – Note: Might and power in this passage represent human effort.
- **Jn. 15:5** – “*I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*”
- **Jer. 17:5–7** – “*Thus says the Lord: 'Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord... Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord.*”
- **Prov. 3:5–6** – “*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and He will make straight your paths.*”
- **2 Cor. 12:9** – “*But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*” (NLT: ‘so that the power of Christ can work through me.’)

* Read commentary below about how Paul stopped striving and started yielding.

Feature	The Flesh (Own Strength)	The Spirit (God's Power)
Source	Human willpower and logic ; relying on human “effort”, “might” or physical “power” ; leaning on one’s own limited understanding ; and making “flesh” one’s primary strength .	The Holy Spirit is the power source Divine grace and revelation ; the active enablement of the Holy Spirit ; abiding in Christ as a branch in a vine; and Christ’s power working through us in our weakness.
Outcome	Burnout and “vain labor” ; an inability to be perfected or finished by human effort ; a state of doing nothing of eternal value. We are to “strive to enter His rest” (Heb. 4:11) , yet we must not waste our lives by habitually gratifying the flesh .	Spiritual fruitfulness and peace ; being perfected through the same Spirit that began the work; bearing “much fruit” through a vital connection to Jesus and by allowing the Holy Spirit to produce fruit ; and having “straight paths” guided by the Lord.
Feeling	Heavy, anxious, and striving ; the frustration of attempting to finish in the flesh what was started in the Spirit; and the burden of trusting in man rather than God.	Empowered and the “easy yoke” ; finding that God’s grace is sufficient even when we feel at our weakest; and a heart of total trust that does not lean on self. Yielding to the Holy Spirit and waiting on His guidance .
Glory	Goes to the individual ; centers on human boasting ; and highlights the limitations of man .	Goes entirely to God ; allows us to boast in our weaknesses so that Christ's power is visible; and honors the Lord of hosts .

b) The Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ (ESV)

The Bible clearly links the Holy Spirit to Jesus Christ. Although they are distinct Persons within the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is the means by which Jesus dwells in believers today—essentially making Him the “presence of Jesus” within us. This fulfills the positional reality that Christ lives in believers, as Paul declares in Col. 1:27: “...Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

- **Rom. 8:9** – “You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the **Spirit of God** dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit **of Christ** does not belong to Him.”
- **Phil. 1:19** – “for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit **of Jesus Christ** this will turn out for my deliverance,”
- **Gal. 4:6** – “And because you are sons, God has sent **the Spirit of his Son** into our hearts, “crying, 'Abba! Father!’”
- **Acts 16:7** – “And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but **the Spirit of Jesus** did not allow them.”
- **2 Cor. 3:17** – “**Now the Lord is the Spirit**, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” (The first half of that last verse—“**Now the Lord is the Spirit**”—is often overlooked, yet it shows the Holy Spirit is how the risen Jesus Himself is present with us.)

Point	The Significance of The Holy Spirit being the Spirit of Christ.
Unity	It proves the Holy Spirit isn't a "third-party" force; He is the very life of Christ in us.
Character	Since He (The Holy Spirit) is the Spirit of Christ, His primary work is to transform/conform us into the image of Christ. (process of sanctification).
Presence	Jesus promised "I am with you always" (Matt. 28:20); He fulfills this promise specifically through the Holy Spirit.

“Living by the Spirit” is the glorious, unchanging reality of our union with Christ — the Holy Spirit is already our 24/7 indwelling power source. “Walking in the Spirit” or “keeping in step with the Spirit” is the daily invitation to yield, abide, and obey. When we stop relying on our own strength and instead surrender to the very Spirit of Christ within us, we step out of exhausting religion and into joyful relationship. The benefits are life-changing: the fruit of the Spirit grows naturally, burnout gives way to rest, our new identity in Christ shines clearly, and the intimacy we long for becomes our everyday experience. So today — and every day — let us choose to live by His power and keep in step with the One who lives inside us.

Note on 2 Cor. 12:9

Paul's personal testimony makes this truth come alive (2 Cor 12:7-12). A "thorn in the flesh" — a messenger of Satan meant to harass him — was allowed to remain so Paul would not become conceited. Three times he pleaded with the Lord in his own strength, begging for the thorn to be removed. But God answered with the secret of Spirit-powered living:

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

Therefore, Paul stopped striving and yielded. He chose to boast gladly in his weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities so that "the power of Christ may rest upon me." He learned the life-changing truth: "When I am weak, then I am strong."

That "power of Christ" is none other than the Holy Spirit — the very Spirit of Christ who already lives inside us believers. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead now rests on us precisely when we stop relying on our own strength and yield to the Spirit's sufficiency.

Commentary on 2 Cor. 12:7-8

In 2 Cor. 12:7-8 Three times Paul asks God to remove the thorn in his flesh, but God's answer is not what he expected... The answer in vs. 9-10 was God's grace is sufficient and that there is power in weakness.

2 Cor. 12:7-12 (ESV) *"7 So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."*

Expositor's Bible Commentary (Abridged Edition): New Testament - 2 Cor. 12:9-10

"9-10 The answer to Paul's prayer did not take the form he had expected. The thorn remained, but so did his recollection of the divine reply. In the distress inflicted at various times by his ailment, God promised that Paul would never lack sufficient grace to overcome it (cf. Ro 8:35-37). This grace of Christ (2 Cor. 13:11) was adequate for him precisely because divine power finds its full scope and strength only in human weakness—the greater the Christian's acknowledged weakness, the more evident Christ's enabling strength (cf. Eph 3:16; Php 4:13). The cross of Christ forms the supreme example of "power-in-weakness" (2 Corinthians 13:4 ESV For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him,...)."

With this spiritual lesson well learned, Paul indicates he would prefer to boast about the sorts of things that exposed his weakness rather than to pray for the removal of the thorn. It was not, however, in the weaknesses themselves that Paul took delight but in the opportunity that such sufferings endured "for Christ's sake" afforded him for Christ's power to be effective in his life.

Commentary on Rom 8:13 – “If you live according to the flesh you will die...”

Romans 8:13 aligns closely with the immediate context and the consistent teaching of Paul in this chapter (and the broader New Testament). Paul is speaking directly to **believers** (“brothers” in v. 12; the same group addressed throughout Romans 8 as those “in Christ Jesus” with “no condemnation,” v. 1). He is not threatening the loss of eternal salvation or the “second death” reserved for unbelievers (Matt. 25:46; Rev. 21:8; 2 Thess. 1:9). Instead, he is warning about a very real **temporal/spiritual death**—a withering of fellowship with God, loss of joy, power, and the abundant life (John 10:10) that the Spirit intends for every child of God. The alternative *“but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”* is vibrant, Spirit-empowered living. This is a classic sanctification warning, not a justification issue.

Scripture Mining: Key Cross-References That Illuminate **Romans 8:13**.

Paul’s language here (“live according to the flesh,” “put to death the deeds of the body,” “you will live”) echoes and expands several other passages that develop the same contrast between flesh and Spirit. These show that the “death” in view is experiential and relational, while the “life” is the full, overflowing experience of what we already possess in Christ.

- **Colossians 3:5–10** (the closest parallel): “Put to death [mortify], therefore, what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry... You have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”
Paul uses the exact same Greek verb for “put to death” (thanatōsate). The “deeds of the body” are the outward expressions of the old, earthly nature. This is active, ongoing warfare enabled by the Spirit—not self-effort.
- **Galatians 5:16–25** (the most extended treatment): “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh... And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.”
This is the practical “how” of Romans 8:13. The Spirit does the killing; we cooperate by walking in Him. The result is the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace...) instead of the works of the flesh.
- **Galatians 6:8**: “For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption [phthora—decay, ruin], but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.”
“Corruption” here is not hell but the withering, decaying experience of a believer who keeps feeding the flesh. It matches the “death” of Romans 8:13 exactly.
- **Romans 6:11–13** (same letter, earlier chapter): “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus... 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...” Paul has already taught that believers are positionally dead to sin; now in ch. 8 he shows the practical outworking: we must actively refuse to live as though that were not true.
- **Ephesians 5:14** and **Ephesians 4:22**: “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you... put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires.”
Believers can fall into a sleep-like “death” of spiritual lethargy and still be saved.

- **1 Corinthians 11:30** and **1 John 5:16–17** add the sobering note that unaddressed sin in believers can even lead to physical death or “sin that does not lead to death” (i.e., discipline, not damnation).

These passages together form a clear biblical theology: the flesh still clamors, but the indwelling Spirit gives us both the desire and the power to kill its deeds. Failure brings relational/spiritual death in the present; success brings the abundant life we were saved for.

Insight from Commentaries

- **GotQuestions.org** (a clear, widely used evangelical resource): “Paul is not talking about salvation in Romans 8:13. He’s not saying that we will lose our salvation if we indulge the flesh. Instead, Paul points out the inherent result of becoming a child of God and being filled with God’s life-giving, behavior-transforming Spirit... The secret to putting to death the deeds of the body is living by the Spirit... in close fellowship with God.”
- **Verse-by-Verse Commentary** (Robert L. Deffinbaugh / Bible Exposition): “Living here has to do with the Spirit-filled life, not salvation, and death is spiritual failure... The subject here is not eternal death in hell but the death of the spiritual life... If we live according to the flesh we are on the point of dying spiritually in time... God does not give temporal life but eternal life at salvation.” The principle: “God warns believers with a great red light that living under the sin capacity will result in time-based death of our spiritual lives.”
- **BibleRef.com**: For true believers, the second half means “we will really live, spiritually speaking, on this side of eternity... experiencing the abundant life that God intends for us.” The warning is real, but it sits inside the unbreakable “no condemnation” of v. 1.
- **John Owen** (the Puritan classic *Mortification of Sin*, still the gold standard on this verse): “Be killing sin or it will be killing you.” Owen spends an entire treatise showing that this is a lifelong, Spirit-powered battle for believers—never a threat to our standing in Christ, but a daily necessity if we want to enjoy communion with Him.

Rom. 8:13 does not teach that a true believer can lose eternal life. It teaches that a true believer will not be content to let sin reign; the Spirit will produce the mortification that leads to life.

Practical Takeaway: Believers who drift into flesh-living experience a real “death”—distance from God, dryness in prayer, loss of joy and power, sometimes even physical consequences—yet they remain saved. The remedy is not trying harder in the flesh but yielding moment-by-moment to the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16). He is the one who actually kills the deeds; our part is to agree with Him, confess quickly (1 John 1:9), renew our minds with Scripture, and walk in dependence.

This passage is one of the most liberating warnings in the Bible: because we are already “not debtors to the flesh” (v. 12), we are free—and empowered—to kill its deeds and really live. The whole of Romans 8 explodes with hope once you see this distinction clearly.