Appendix C
Spirit-Led Living

Pleasing Christ and Making Him Preeminent By Spirit Led Living

Wanting Christ to have first place all the time in everything and *having* Him be first in your life are two entirely different things, aren't they?! Out of a desire to give Him the place in your life that He so richly deserves, it can be very easy to think about various things that you should do and shouldn't do. To be sure, there are definite commands and exhortations that God gives Christians. There *are* things that you should do or shouldn't do. What we're talking about though is what do we depend on to give Christ the preeminence He deserves? Another way of saying this is **what do you need to do to live a spiritual life**?

Think about some specific things that are considered essential for living a spiritual life:

- Personal Bible reading
- Church attendance
- Witnessing
- Praying
- Giving
- Avoiding wrong music, entertainment, etc.
- Dressing modestly and appropriately
- Serving the Lord

These are definitely good things! None of them are wrong. If you were a young Christian and knew someone who had been a believer for a long time and these are things that he did, you could quickly come to the conclusion that if *you* do them you can be just as spiritual!

If this is your approach, I want you to see what you would be relying on to live a spiritual or Christ-preeminent life: yourself. One of the problems with the "list" approach to spiritual living is that it can quickly and easily degenerate into a "check, done that—I'm okay with the Lord" attitude. The result is that you think you are spiritual because of what *you've* done. The objective was supposedly accomplished by *your* compliance with a "law" of spiritual things that spiritual people do.

There were some believers during Paul's day who felt that by observing a certain "code of Law" they would be spiritual. But listen to the apostle Paul's response to them: "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Gal 3:3). If the Galatians continued believing this way they would not be freed from sin's power but enslaved to it all over again (cf. 4:9-10). Paul says that if one is in Christ Jesus, "keeping the checklist" isn't what gets you and makes you right with God: it is "faith working through love" (5:6).

So, how *does* a Christian live a truly spiritual life so that Christ is preeminent in all things? The Bible says that you must "walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh" (Gal 5:16). The idea of "walk" refers to how you live your life. Thus, to "walk by the Spirit" means that your life is *governed* or *controlled* "by the Spirit." Another way that the Bible describes this is "being filled with the Spirit" (cf. Eph 5:18). This doesn't mean that you get "more" of the Spirit. That's impossible, because the Holy Spirit is God and omnipresent—you have *all* of the Holy Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit has to do with being *controlled* by the Spirit.

But how can you "walk by the Spirit" and "be filled with the Spirit"? Does the Holy Spirit "whisper" in your ear in some kind of weird way? Is it based on impressions or feelings that you have within your heart? How can the Spirit govern and control your life? Is it something that happens once in awhile at certain crisis times in the Christian life?

The Spirit-controlled and governed life is an ongoing thing; it is the normal Christian experience of walking with the Lord. The tool the Holy Spirit uses to govern, direct, and control Christians' lives is the Word of God. Therefore, a spiritual life, one that has Christ preeminent all the time in everything, is a life that is governed and controlled by the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God (Eph 6:17). Consider these essential aspects of a life that is governed and controlled by the Holy Spirit:

1) Yielded to the Word (Simple Obedience)

   Rom 6:13 "present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God." **The more you're in the Word, the more the Word can be in you and direct your life**

2) Continual Prayerfulness, Asking for Help & Confessing Sin

   - Eph 4:30 "do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God." Harboring sin grieves the Spirit
   - There isn't a special prayer you need to pray in order to be filled with the Spirit. The Spirit will be in control of your life when you gladly obey Him. God commands you to be controlled by the Spirit (Eph 5:18); He does not command you to pray to be controlled.
   - There is, however, a relationship between prayer and being controlled by the Spirit. In Acts 4:24-31 the believers prayed and were filled with the Spirit. The Bible doesn't say that they prayed to be filled with the Spirit but prayer was in the context.
   - **Before one is yielded and obedient there is a knowledge of the Word and a communication with God about the things to be obeyed. Prayer cannot be avoided; it is *the* expression of humility, submission, and yieldedness.**

3) Obey, Depending on God's Help and Enablement

   - You must take that step of obedient faith and obey God, and you need to do it depending on God to help you.

A spiritual life, one that has Christ preeminent all the time in everything by walking by the Spirit, is simply a matter of knowing the Word of God and gladly and willingly obeying it by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:13).

What can you expect to experience if the Spirit controls and governs your life?

1) Strength in temptation (Luke 4:1-2)
2) Boldness in testimony (Acts 4:23, 31)
3) Equipping for service in your church (Acts 6:1-3)
4) Courage in the face of death (Acts 7:54-58)
5) Power to proclaim Jesus (Acts 9:17-20)
6) Thanksgiving and singing in the heart (Eph 5:18-21)
7) The fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)

Walking by the Spirit, being controlled or governed, does not mean one instantly becomes spiritually mature. Consider a six-month old baby: she is in good health, but she is far from physically mature. So it is with a new Christian: you can be in excellent health but you have a long ways to go before you're spiritual mature.

All this does not mean obedience will be easy and instantaneous. It does mean, though, that, regardless of how you feel or what the circumstances may be, *you will do what God has said*.

Remember, there are definite commands and prohibitions from Christ. The issue here is our attitude and approach to these. Don't rely on keeping a checklist; rely on the Lord to gladly and willingly obey His Word. It is a freeing, liberating thing to realize that you obey God not out of a legalistic fear but out of a desire to walk with the Spirit.