

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **The Sufficiency of the Spirit, Part 1**

Scripture: Galatians 3:1-3

Code: 90-30

I want to talk to you on the subject of the sufficiency of the Spirit...the sufficiency of the Spirit. A number of years ago I gave a message entitled "The Sufficiency of Spiritual Resources." Since that time I gave a two-part message called "The Sufficiency of Scripture." And as I was thinking through those particular matters, it was very obvious in my mind that there was something important left out in that regard and that is the sufficiency of the Holy Spirit. And so, I would like to ask you, if you will, to turn your thinking this morning and next Lord's day to this matter of examining the unique ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

I feel that perhaps I need to tell you something a little more deeply about what's in my heart, and so I want to do that. I love the Holy Spirit. I love the communion with the Holy Spirit that I as a believer enjoy. I love the truth about the Holy Spirit that I have come to understand from Scripture. I love the intimacy of having Him lead in my life and direct me. I love the way He comes to me, as it were, through the lives of other believers who by His gifts minister to me. I love all that Scripture says about the Holy Spirit. And I think you if you think about it understand why I say all of that. The gift of the Holy Spirit is precious to me and I'm sure to you as well.

I can remember when I was in college and then in seminary and the few years after seminary when I was preaching all around the country that almost everywhere I went it was practically mandated that I give a message on the ministry of the Holy Spirit. You can hardly do a Bible conference or a youth camp or a special meeting series without at least one time, and very often more than that, speaking on the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Christians were talking about what it was to walk in the Spirit, what it was to be filled with the Spirit. In fact there was a movement practically built on the idea of being filled with the Spirit.

Christians were talking about the gifts of the Spirit. There was a tremendous interest in how the Spirit of God gifts believers and how He works through them in the manifestation and operation of those gifts for the building of the body. And the Holy Spirit was at the very focal point of life in the church an interest in the body of Christ.

That's all changed. And now I would have to say that the Holy Spirit is the forgotten member of the trinity. And so in a sense in my own frail way I come this morning to defend the priority of the Holy Spirit. I want you to open your Bible, if you will, with me to Galatians chapter 3...Galatians chapter 3. And I do not intend to do a full exposition of this text but I do want to draw from it one very important

spiritual principle that will act as the foundation for what is to be said. As Paul writes to the Galatians in this chapter he begins in verse 1 by saying, "You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you, did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law? Or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" We really don't need to read anymore than that.

The question that I want to pose to you is the question in verse 3, are you so foolish, having begun by the Spirit are you now being perfected by the flesh? That's the question. Now all of us who are Christians will acknowledge that our life in Christ was begun by the Spirit. We would probably tacitly acknowledge that it therefore cannot be perfected by the flesh. And yet it is to that very issue that we must direct our attention whether wittingly or unwittingly, we have in the church today a kind of Christianity that from a pragmatic viewpoint believes that though it was begun in the Spirit it somehow can be perfected in the flesh. The Galatians would have to admit that they were saved by the hearing of faith...that salvation came by faith in Christ. And Paul wants them to understand that sanctification comes by trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit. That as you were saved by faith you are sustained and perfected by faith. As you trusted in the saving work of the Spirit, so you must trust in the sanctifying work of the Spirit. And no one who has begun by the Spirit and entered into eternal life can have that life perfected by the flesh. It's little wonder that Paul calls them foolish twice, once in verse 1 and once in verse 3. They were foolish because they started out trusting in God, in the Holy Spirit for their salvation, and then compromised the gospel of grace by developing a system of human effort by which they would then be sanctified.

You will notice also in verse 1 that he uses the term "bewitched." It's an interesting term, *baskaino*. It means to fascinate. It means to charm someone in a misleading way. They had been fascinated by their own capabilities, by their own works, by their own effort. They had been fascinated or charmed by some who in effect told them that sanctification is something you can accomplish on your own. They received the Holy Spirit by faith. They began their Christian life in the power of the Holy Spirit. And now all of a sudden they had become willing victims who succumbed to a flesh-pleasing, self-attainment pattern of sanctification. So Paul's point is very clear here. He says if a person receives eternal salvation through trusting in the crucified Christ and receiving the fullness of the indwelling Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation, and if a person retains the indwelling Spirit through all of his Christian experience, then why in the world would he trade in supernatural power for human effort? You cannot achieve a spiritual goal with a natural means. That's his point. Since the Holy Spirit is the source of spiritual life, initially He is the source of spiritual life continually. The Holy Spirit, you might say by way of analogy, is to the Christian what the creator is to the creation.

For example, without God, the creator, the world would never have come into existence. And without God, the creator, also holding up, sustaining, persevering, the world would go out of existence. He brought it into existence and He maintains its existence. So it is with the Christian. Without the Holy

Spirit none of us would ever be born again, none of us would enter into supernatural eternal life. And without the Holy Spirit's constant sanctifying sustaining preserving work, the spiritual life of the Christian would drop back into spiritual deadness from whence it came. We are secured eternally because the Spirit of God sustains and sanctifies us. Paul put it in these terms, "He that has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ." He, the Spirit of God, who began the work sustains the work. That's why Paul said, "We live in the Spirit...we live in the Spirit," Galatians 5. He is the source of our life. He is the sphere of our spiritual existence.

So why would we begin with the Spirit and then try to perfect ourselves in the flesh? Now you might be saying to yourself, "Well, who would want to do that?" And I submit to you that that is pretty much what I see happening in the church today, the church that we're a part of. You say, "Well, how is this relevant?" Well I think this passage may be as relevant in our day as it has ever been because I'm convinced that the evangelical church today which began in the Spirit is now trying to perfect itself in the flesh.

Let me see if I can't help you to understand what I mean. I guess the bottom line of what I mean is simply this, there has been systematically and perhaps somewhat subtly a process by which the church has eliminated the Holy Spirit from the matter of sanctification. This has come to be of great concern to me and I never would have thought I would come to the day when I would need to give a message like this but here we are. The rapid subtle elimination of the Holy Spirit from the core of Christian living poses a monumental threat to the church. Because unless we are perfected by the Holy Spirit, all of our efforts are in vain.

Now you say, "How could we ever get to the point where we who began in the Spirit would turn to the flesh? What have been the contributing factors to the elimination of the Holy Spirit from the core of Christian living?" Let me see if I can't give you three. Number one, I think one contributing factor to the demise of the Holy Spirit as the priority personality in Christian sanctification has been the Charismatic Movement...the Charismatic Movement. You see, in the Charismatic Movement there is a misrepresentation of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. There's a misrepresentation of the significance of the baptism with the Spirit. There's a misrepresentation of what is really involved in the filling of the Spirit. There is, I believe, a confusion about the work of the Spirit of God in the life of the believer in terms of illumination. So you have a movement that basically misrepresents the Holy Spirit. And when a movement misrepresents the Holy Spirit it really tries then to perfect in the flesh what was begun in the Spirit because unless you rightly understand and submit to and seek the proper work of the Spirit, then you cannot come to spiritual growth.

What has the Charismatic Movement done? Well the Charismatic Movement I guess in great measure has misrepresented the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the sense that they have associated the Holy Spirit strictly with that which is supernatural, sort of sign, wonder, a sort of a magical member of the trinity who does these very external things that can be seen and felt and heard. And they thus

have down played and diminished that internal sanctifying purging purifying work that the Spirit of God does in the heart. They have reduced the Holy Spirit in my judgment to a sort of a genie, they rub their little sort of religious bottle and out pops the Holy Spirit who then is demanded to do whatever they want the Holy Spirit to do. "Holy Spirit, I want this...Holy Spirit, I command You to do this..." the genie who does the signs and the wonders.

Because the Charismatic Movement has misrepresented the filling and the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit and because they have externalized the Holy Spirit reducing Him to a genie who does tricks, I believe that biblical Christians have sort of retreated a little bit. And we've backed off of the doctrines of the Holy Spirit. We don't want to talk about them. We don't want to deal definitively with the ministry of the Spirit of God. In fact, whenever we put a series on the Holy Spirit on the radio, we get ready because we know some stations are going to cancel us. And it's basically because there are some people who don't want anyone to talk definitively about the Holy Spirit because that alienates certain people so we sort of back off. And in retreating from error about the Holy Spirit, we become fearful of speaking the truth for fear that someone might be offended. And so there's been kind of a retreat from the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit sort of disappeared out of traditional biblical evangelical churches. There's very little talk about Him, very little conversation, very little teaching, very little preaching. I would daresay that in my own experience I rarely ever hear anyone anymore preach definitively, specifically on the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

But there's a second reason, not only a sort of reaction or backlash to the Charismatic misinterpretation and misrepresentation, but there's a second thing that I think has contributed to the declining interest in the ministry of the Holy Spirit and that's what I'll call pragmatism. Let me put it to you as simply as I can. Pragmatism has replaced supernaturalism. Pragmatism has replaced supernaturalism. We have developed a pseudo-Christian humanism that has literally infiltrated the church today and we have become man-centered. It's not hard to understand this, let me give you a parallel.

For one thousand years, from about 500 A.D. to 1500 A.D. we had in western culture what as known as the Dark Ages. The Roman Catholic Church had become an entity political as well as religious and brought basically western culture under its power. It was called the Dark Ages because people were in the dark about everything except what the Roman system told them. There was no printing press. There was no mass material available. People were kept in ignorance and as a result there was not much progress.

After the Reformation which began to be launched in the sixteenth century there was an explosion of independent thinking. The Reformation shattered the chains of Romanism and for a couple of hundred years man began to think creatively, he invented the printing press, he began to pass out material. People could see, study, analyze, criticize, evaluate. Life took on a different tone. You had the age of enlightenment, man began to look at his own mind and see how bright he was. You had

the birth of the industrial revolution as his brilliance began to show up in the things that he could make and create and invent. And what was the child of that? The child of that was rationalism. And what was rationalism? The worship of the human intellect. A thousand years man believed he was little more than an animal. All of a sudden he found out he had all kinds of ideas, all kinds of creative genius, all kinds of capability to develop all kinds of wonderful things in his world. And it didn't take him long then to say that the mind is God. And Thomas Payne pulled it all together in the most famous book of that time called *The Age of Reason*. And in *The Age of Reason*, it's a two-part book, half of the book debunks the Bible and the other half exalts the human mind as the ultimate deity.

And out of rationalism came liberal theology. What did they do? They went back to the Bible and said, "That's not rational, we'll throw that out." And man began to worship his mind. Whenever there is a time period of great achievement, man turns from the supernatural to the natural and begins to see the tremendous capabilities of his own mind. And he falls down and worships. We're in the same time right now. If you think they had the tremendous advances in the age of enlightenment, imagine compared to today what they would look like. We live in a very sophisticated, a very very complex advanced amazingly advanced culture. We have accomplished unbelievable things in this culture, amazing things. And the legacy of that is that man begins to be literally narcissistic in terms of worshiping and loving his own intellect. He is so resourceful, he is so imaginative, he is so capable, he has come up with so many things that he believes he has all the answers to all the questions. And so the achievements of an amazingly advanced culture lead man to believe that his ability is greater than it is. And as a result of that, man begins to look to himself for all of his answers and to the systems that he can devise.

Daniel and I were talking on the plane as we were flying to Denver on Thursday and we were talking about why there's such a disinterest in the church in prayer. And I said that the disinterest in prayer is directly related to this bizarre egotistical man-centered view that he can solve all his own problems. Why would he pray? It isn't that we don't understand the theology of prayer. It isn't that we don't understand the command to pray. It isn't that we don't understand the elements of prayer, it's that we don't need to pray. That's the bottom line, pray for what? For what? Give us this day our daily bread? Are you kidding me? I've got more daily bread than I care to have. What do we need? And we have developed the systems to deal with everything. That's the reason for the decline in prayer. You don't give a lecture on prayer to desperate people. We've got the solution to everything.

Second Corinthians 10:4 if we just change it a little bit in this culture would say, "The weapons of our warfare are fleshly." We are fighting the spiritual battle on the fleshly level. We have no sense of need for prayer. We have no sense of dependence on the divine Spirit. And we believe in ourselves, even in the church. That's why we tell people if you want to solve your problems, get in touch with yourself. Reach down deep within yourself. That's why we tell people that we've got programs and methodology to solve our problems.

Pastors always ask me in these pastors conferences, "What do you think about 'church-growth' principles? Church growth techniques?" I have a standard answer. A reporter said to me one time, "Do you have a great desire to build the church?" I said, "No, I have absolutely no desire to build the church." And he was kind of surprised, writing for a Christian magazine. He said, "Really, you have no desire to build the church?" I said, "No," I said, "Christ said He would build the church and I don't want to compete with Him."

What do you mean "church-growth" principles? Do you mean that there is some methodology by which I can make the church grow because of my human ingenuity? What are you talking about? My Bible says the Lord added daily to the church such as should be saved, who grows the church anyway? Who grows the church? Do we believe that we can develop systems by which we can get the church to grow? I mean, systems of cleverness? You see, we're rich and increase with goods and have need of nothing and we figured out a system for everything. We are really hopelessly trapped in pragmatism, it's pragmatism rather than supernaturalism. We have developed a sophisticated methodology to deal with every issue in the church and in the family and in our personal lives. The weapons of our warfare have become fleshly. We concentrate on human plans, human programs, human methods, human means, human systems under the delusion that man is able to solve his spiritual problems if he just gets the right technique. Just got the right system.

Preaching reflects this. Preaching is man-centered. Preaching is basically dominated by a sort of relational mentality where for the most part people are talking about how to adjust to each other, it's man to man, not man to God. Man to man, not man to God. It's directed at teaching you technique to be implemented in your life so you can get what you want.

Let me plunge a little bit into a theological term. I like to think of it as a sort of "Arminianism gone amok." You say, "What do you mean by that?" Well the bottom line in any kind of pragmatism, the bottom line is a failure to understand some basic theological truths. One, anybody who believes he can accomplish spiritual ends through fleshly means, anybody who thinks you can begin in the Spirit and be perfected in the flesh, anybody who believes you can solve spiritual problems with manmade systems or ideas basically doesn't understand two things. Number one, doesn't understand the sovereignty of God. Does not understand the sovereignty of God. What do you mean by that? That only God can solve the problems...only God...only God. Two, doesn't understand the depravity of man, doesn't understand that man can't solve the problem at all. So the only hope is that man gets in touch with God, not that man figures out how to get in touch with man. That doesn't help. Two people working together don't help unless one of them has God working through him on behalf of the other.

But if you do not understand that sovereign God alone can work in the spiritual dimension, then you're going to come up with some human means. If you do not understand that man is depraved and his depravity is so deep and pervasive that he cannot do anything for himself, then you're going to come

up with some human means. But if you understand that God is absolutely sovereign, man is totally depraved, then you're going to seek a supernatural solution to a problem. And the weapons of your warfare will be spiritual not fleshly.

Pragmatism simply says that we have figured it out, we don't need God, we don't need prayer. That's why prayer is low on the priority. That's why the Holy Spirit is almost not even talked about because we don't need the Holy Spirit or prayer, we've got all these wonderful seminars...solutions, methodologies.

Let me give you a third one, and this overlaps a little bit. And I mentioned a few weeks ago this term, I want to come back to it for a moment. The third contributing factor is what I'll call psychological sanctification. This is the new approach to spiritual problems. And it basically flows out of humanism. It flows out of the same kind of pragmatism. To deal with your problems, it says, to deal with your deep seeded problems you need to go to a counselor. And the counselor will help you get in touch with your deep-seeded problems. He'll help you to reach inside and dig out the answers that are there. The counselor will help you to find the answer within yourself.

Now let me say at this point that there are many wonderful counselors who follow the Word of God and prayer and are used by the Holy Spirit. And the gift of exhortation, the gift of counseling is a wonderful, blessed operation by which the Holy Spirit ministers to believers. We are all called to mutually help each other, stimulate each other, encourage one another and fulfill all of those responsibilities. And I'm not at all deprecating that. There are many who use the Word of God and who help people to come into the presence of God through prayer and biblical counsel and that is wonderful.

But I am deeply concerned that there's a new definition of sanctification that is really outside the Bible and apart from the Holy Spirit. I have noticed that pastoral majors have been replaced by psychology majors. Biblical emphasis has been replaced by psychological emphasis. There's little or no mention of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in many curricula that are used today. Self-esteem, self-worth, a man-centered kind of orientation has led people into a greater confidence in their own ability than they should have, and frankly a greater confidence in them than the Holy Spirit.

You know, you read the Psalms, you read the Psalms and what do you see going through the Psalms? Take just David, for example. You see a man wrestling with every imaginable problem in life, right? He's got his happy times, he's got his sad times. He's got the times when the pain is so deep he can hardly bear to exist such as when Absalom his own son tried to take his life. Can you imagine wanting to be killed by your own son? He's got horrible guilt over immorality and murder. He runs the gamut of every problem. And what is the solution? The Psalms show you the solution. To whom does he go? Psalm after Psalm after Psalm after Psalm, to whom does he go? He goes to God. Always he goes to God. And he wrestles with his own heart. And he wrestles with the nature of God. And he

says, "Holy and awesome is Your name." And he says, "Purge me and cleanse me." And the best he can, he tells God what he feels and he cries out to God and he even admits You have every right to punish me. But he wrestles with God and it's deep and it's painful. And sometimes at the end of a Psalm you see the window, and sometimes you don't, but he goes to God because he understood the sovereignty of God and the depravity of man. He knew where he had to go for the solution.

Now let me just help you to understand why you can't find the answers in the flesh. Turn in Jeremiah to chapter 17...Jeremiah chapter 17, I want to show you two verses here. And I want to give you this general perspective that is very very important. In verse 9 of Jeremiah 17, which by the way is a very familiar verse, we learn a principle that we don't want to miss by virtue of familiarity. Verse 9 says, "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick." Now, folks, you know what he's describing? You have one of those, so do I, one of those deceitful desperately sick hearts. What does he mean by heart? He means mind, same thing, heart and mind and that's clear from verse 10 where he uses the word heart and mind. Your thinking capacities, your analysis capacity, your evaluation capability, your mind, he said it is more deceitful than all else.

Now when somebody comes along and says, "Now what you need to do is look inside and get in touch with yourself," you know what I say? Hey, I don't trust what's in there. Because it doesn't give me the right answer. My heart is deceitful above all things. The most deceitful thing that I'll ever run into is my heart. You want to know why? Because I am depraved, even though I'm redeemed I still am depraved. And I still have sin that is in me. And the sin that is in me is biased in my own favor and against God, and consequently it lies to me about what I am really like. And it makes me think I'm better than I am. And I'm not responsible for what I am responsible for. It deceives me. That's basic. The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick. Then this rhetorical question, who can understand it? And what's the answer? Who can understand it? Nobody...nobody, I can't. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4:4 and you need to know this, "I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted but the one who examines me is the Lord." Paul says I'm looking into my own life, I'm saying I don't know anything against myself, my conscience is clear, but that doesn't acquit me, you know why? Because I have a lying heart. I can't trust my heart.

Proverbs 16:2, "All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight." Have you ever felt like that? Hey, I've looked at my life and I'm clean. You know what the rest of the verse says? "But the Lord weighs the motives." The Lord knows what your heart won't tell you, your heart is deceitful, it's depraved. You can't trust it. You can't trust it. "There is a way which seems right to a man but the ends thereof are the ways of...what? death," Proverbs 14:12. You can't trust your heart.

So these people say, "Well, you need to reach down inside of you and find the answer." Not so, you're going to get a lie. It's not the way to get the answer. You say, "Well who knows the answer?" I'll tell you who knows the answer, look at verse 10, "I the Lord search the heart, I test the mind even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds." I'll tell him the truth



about himself and I'll show him the results as well. You can't trust yourself. Only you can trust God, that's all. You have to go to Him. That's why we have to depend upon the Holy Spirit, not ourselves.

You say, "Well no, I don't trust myself, I go to my counselor, I go to my therapist." I hear people say, "You need to find a good therapist." Listen to me, if you can't get the truth out of your own heart which is in you and which you know better than anybody else, how in the world is somebody else going to know your heart? And yet some people think they can know somebody's heart, you can't know my heart. I can fool you all day long and I can fool me, too. I can cry when I don't mean it and I can laugh when I don't mean it. And I could admit something I didn't do, and I can not admit what I did. You can't mess with my heart. I can't know my heart perfectly, so how you going to know it? So here we are, I'm sitting there trying to discover what's in me and my heart's telling my lies and you're trying to figure out the lies that I'm telling you so you can tell me what I ought to do to my deceitful heart. Who in the world are we kidding? No wonder it takes so long to help somebody in that method.

I want to show you Psalm...several Psalms, Psalm 7. Psalm 7 has some things to say and then we'll look at a few more passages in Psalms. The Psalm 7 verse 9 says, "Let the evil of the wicked come to an end but establish the righteous," then this, "for the righteous God tries the hearts and minds." So basic, the righteous God tries the hearts and minds. He tests, He evaluates, He knows the truth.

Psalm 26...Psalm 26 verse 2, this is right, this is right, you've got the right attitude here as you write this Psalm, "Examine me, O Lord, and try me, test my mind and my heart." David doesn't want to go to some kind of human counselor. "O Lord, You do it, test my heart, show me." This is a wrestling in prayer. This is repentance. This is brokenness. This is contrition.

Look at Psalm 139...Psalm 139 verse 1, this is so good, "O Lord, says David, Thou hast searched me and known me." God doesn't get any skewed signals, is He? No. "Thou doest know when I sit down and when I rise up, Thou doest understand my thought from afar, Thou doest scrutinize my path and my lying down and art intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O Lord, Thou doest know it all. Thou hast inclosed me behind and before and laid Thy hand upon me, such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is too high, I cannot attain to it." Now get this, I love this, "Where can I go from...whom?...Thy...what?...Spirit." Who knows you? Who knows everything there is to know about you? The Spirit. Then if you want to get in touch with you're like, who do you get in touch with? Yourself? Somebody else? No, the Spirit.

Psalm 32, you should memorize this, Psalm 32 verse 6, this is so practical, the psalmist writes, "Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found surely in a flood of great waters, they shall not reach them." The picture here is, here's a guy and the flood is coming. He's drowning in it, whatever kind of flood it is, metaphorically, analogically. He's got trouble. He's got massive trouble. Now what does it say? Let everyone who is godly do what? Pray to Thee in a time when thou mayest be found. When you're available, and that's now for us. So what do you do

in the midst of your trouble? What do you do in the midst of your stress and anxiety and all of that? To whom do you go? Look at verse 7, "Thou art my hiding place, Thou doest preserve me from trouble," and then this, triumphantly, "Thou doest surround me with...what?...songs of deliverance." And then the promise of the Lord in verse 8, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go, I will counsel you." Isn't that good? You want a counselor? Who is the wonderful counselor? The Lord. "I will counsel you and I'll counsel you with My eye on you." You want accountability? You say, "You must have accountability in a relationship." You've got accountability. God sees everything you do...everything you do, hears everything you say, knows every thought you think. Is that accountability? That's accountability. Anybody else that accountable? No. Who's your counselor? God's my counselor. You can't trust your own heart. You just can't.

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians to which we'll return next Lord's day, I just want to read you two verses, 1 Corinthians 2:12, "Now we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God that we might know the things freely given to us by God." Now if you want to know the resources available, if you want to know the spiritual supernatural resources available from God, then get in touch with the Spirit cause He's the one who reveals them. That's it. We are taught, verse 13 says, by the Spirit. So when I want to know the solutions and the answer and the counsel and the wisdom and the truth about myself and my problems and solutions, I go to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's the source.

Turn with me to Job chapter 12 and here is some wisdom. Here is some wisdom. Job 12:13, now it speaks about God here, this is a little piece of Job's theology, "With God," verse 13, Job 12, "with God are wisdom and might." Look at this, "To Him belong counsel and understanding." May I ask you, why do we substitute some person's human opinion about us in the place of prayer? I'll tell you why, because we have been led to the delusion that we are able to solve our problems by our cleverness, ingenuity, and systems. The psalmist, Job, whoever, had no such delusion. With a problem he went to the one who had wisdom and might to whom belongs counsel and understanding. But we substitute everything for communion with the living God. And we substitute our own abilities for the power of the Spirit.

And then he goes on to talk about God. He tears down, it can't be rebuilt. He imprisons a man and there can be no release. He says some other things about God. But look at verse 17, interesting, "He makes counselors walk barefoot." He strips them. "He makes fools out of judges. He loosens the bond of kings, binds their loins with a girdle. He makes priests walk barefoot." I mean, He can strip men of all their supposed glory. They may say they're counselors or they're judges or they're kings or they're priests, He strips them all naked.

Verse 20, the trusted ones, the ones you really turn to, "He deprives them of speech. The elders, He takes away their discernment." In other words, God is so far beyond any human. Verse 24, "He deprives the intelligence of the chiefs of the earth's people and makes them wander in a pathless

waste. They grope in darkness with no light. He makes the stagger like a drunken man." You say, "What is he saying?" He's comparing God with any human counselor, any human king, any human mind.

So where you going to turn? You're going to turn to God. Now the great tragedy of the church and I want you to understand this very carefully, the great tragedy of the church today is that it is filled with sin and weakness. And I'm not going to predict the future but I'm going to tell you in my heart I believe that the sin and weakness of the church is going to continue to get worse and worse and worse until finally the church wakes up to the fact that spiritual warfare is fought with spiritual weapons, not fleshly ones. And that the solution to personal problems, family problems, corporate church problems, the solution is in God's counsel, ministered through the Spirit of God in response to faithful prayer. You cannot begin in the Spirit and be perfected in the flesh, but that is the drift that men have gone since Galatians because they believe so much in their mind's ability to grasp reality. And in fact, it's a lie.

The church is in grave danger of massive sin and impotence because it is developing a new kind of light without the Holy Spirit and without prayer. Techniques and methods and all that stuff, theories, therapies, etc., will never ever ever restrain the flesh because they appeal to the flesh. We want a quick fix, we don't want spiritual battle, we don't want spiritual warfare. We want a quick fix, we don't want to wrestle with God. We don't want to get on our face before a holy God like David time after time after time after time and plead and cry out in brokenness and beg God to look inside and see what we are and fix up what needs to be fixed up. We don't want to spend our time on our knees pleading with God to make our families what they ought to be. We don't want to turn from some reason to the Spirit of God and learn what it is to walk in the Spirit and know the power of the Spirit. That's wrestling with God. That's spiritual battle. We're not into that. We're into, you know, high class yuppie sanctification by intellectual achievement.

So this message is a call back to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It's a call to reject the man-centered humanistic psychological solutions to problems, solutions that are built on man's false impressions of his own ability. We begun in the Spirit and we will be perfected in the Spirit...not in the flesh.

You say, "But how does the Spirit do that? And how can I tap into the Spirit's power?" You come next week you're going to find out because that's exactly what we're going to talk about. Today, the problem. Next time the solution. Let's bow in prayer.

Lord, we can't wait to hear how we can know the fullness of the Spirit, the power of the Spirit for every need of life. We can't wait to hear about the sufficiency of the Spirit, having heard about the insufficiency of the flesh. Help us to think biblically, help us to think spiritually. Father, we do thank You for the gift of Your Spirit and for His ministry in us, to us and through us. And may we above all things pursue the depth of that relationship which alone can overpower the flesh and perfect the work

which that very same Spirit began for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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