

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

Our spiritual pilgrimage is one of learning to walk in the Spirit on a path of refinement and holiness until we attain to the blessings of sons of God. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” Rom 8:14-15.

KEY BIBLE READINGS

Gal 5:16-25

“I say then: **Walk** [deport or conduct oneself] **in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts** [opposes or withstands] **against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the** [Holy] **Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”**

Rom 8:1-2, 5-6, 12-14

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, **who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death...For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace... Therefore, brethren, we are debtors-- not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For 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. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”**

These readings portray two distinctly different manners of conducting ourselves in our daily walk.

1. We may walk according to the flesh, which means allowing our conduct to be controlled by our flesh [our natural bodily and self-motivated emotional desires, and worldly influences]. Walking after the flesh, leads to spiritual death—a death that pervades even our mortal bodies.
2. Or we may walk according to the Spirit, which means to be guided and influenced by the Holy Spirit in all that we do. The Holy Spirit is the representative of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and so to walk after the Spirit is to allow ourselves to be guided into the will of God by the Holy Spirit. To walk after [or be controlled by] the Holy Spirit, leads to a life and peace, which also pervades our whole being, imparting the very life of Christ to us.

The outcome of our choice in the way we conduct our daily walk, after the Spirit or after the flesh, is that inevitably we will be influenced by a spiritual power of life or death.

The Path of the Cross

Both readings point to the primary condition necessary for walking after the Spirit.

“those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires”

“if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body.”

Since it is the flesh, or passions and desires of the body, that oppose the Spirit by endeavouring to control our conduct in our daily walk, they must be put on the cross immediately they are manifest, so that they can be put to death by the Spirit. We do this on the grounds of the incorporation of “our old man,” or carnal self-nature, into the death of Jesus on the cross.

“For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that

the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.” Rom 6:5-6. This is the “path of the cross,” which should be the daily walk of every Christian.

MAINTAINING OUR SPIRITS

This study deals with a second and equally important necessity in walking after the Spirit—that is, maintaining our own spirits in a state of strength and health. Our own spirit is the God-conscious part of us that is used by the Holy Spirit to guide us in the will of God. It is the spiritual doorway through which the Holy Spirit can operate in influencing us.

We may have presumed that because the spirit is the higher part of man, that it is not possible for it to be violated, and that to grow spiritually every part of us must be brought into subjection to the control of our spirits. This is essentially true if we maintain our spirits in a state of spiritual health.

Our Spirits are Constantly Open to Change.

However, the fact is that our spirits constantly change as they are subjected to the manner of our living. For instance, David prayed to God after committing adultery and murder, **“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”** Ps 51:10. Here are some more readings illustrating the changing nature of our spirits.

“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Prov 16:18

“A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken [afflicted, smitten, wounded].” Prov 15:13

“A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.” Prov 15:4

“A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.” Prov 17:22

“I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia.” 2 Cor 2:13

“The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness, but who can bear a broken spirit?” Prov 18:14

“Now it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled...” Gen 41:8

“So Moses spoke thus to the children of Israel; but they did not heed Moses, because of anguish of spirit and cruel bondage.”

“The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.” Ps 34:18

“Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.” Prov 16:19

Our Consciences May Change the State of Our Spirits

Our conscience is ‘the organ’ of our spirits that enables us to discern good and evil. When we first entertain an evil deed, our conscience ‘pricks’ us, and we either repent and turn away from the evil, or we shrug off the warnings of the conscience and keep on sinning. When we continually keep sinning, the pricking of our conscience becomes weaker and weaker until we entertain that particular sin without any registration of the conscience. In fact our conscience takes on the characteristic of the habitual sin, so that we may have a jealous spirit, a contentious spirit, a lustful or impure spirit, and so on.

To have a spirit open to the Holy Spirit, we must have a clear or pure conscience.

“Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, “Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” Acts 23:1

“This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.” Acts 24:16

“Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith...” 1 Tim 1:5

“I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day...” 2 Tim 1:3.

A Weakened or Seared Conscience Endangers Our Spiritual Walk

On the other hand, a damaged conscience endangers our spiritual walk.

“...having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck...” 1 Tim 1:19/

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron...” 1 Tim 4:1-2

"To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled." Titus 1:15

The state, or spiritual health of our spirits, determines the degree to which the Holy Spirit may influence us. We have an obligation to maintain a pure conscience, obeying its registrations by repenting and turning away from the sins it discloses.

We are Responsible for Maintaining Our Spirits in Cooperation with God

“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.” Prov 16:32

“Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls.” Prov 25:28

"Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel?" Ezek 18:31

“Therefore take heed to your spirit [in this case your conscience], and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.” Mal 2:15

“For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” 1 Cor 6:20.

God is Moulding Our Spirits

“The burden of the word of the LORD against Israel. Thus says the LORD, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms [forms into shape] the spirit of man within him...” Zech 12:1. Because of His perfect knowledge of our inner being, God is able to mould our spirits by His workmanship.

Be Continually Strengthened in Your Spirits

Our spirit, like our physical body, becomes stronger as we exercise it in spiritual praise and worship, meeting together, and reading the Scriptures.

“He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself [makes his spirit strong], but he who prophesies edifies the church... For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.” 1 Cor 14:4, 14

“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...” Eph 5:18-20

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you [in the spirit] richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Col 3:16

“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” Heb 10:24-25

The Effect of Our Minds on Our Spirits

The second Key Bible Reading states that **“those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”**

This reading speaks about the set of our minds—whether they predominantly open our spirits to the influence of the Spirit, or are continually influenced by the things of the flesh and of the world. When we are spiritually minded, our spirits are continually open to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The question arises—Is it possible to walk throughout the day, regardless of what we are doing, maintaining the window of our spirits open and tuned to the input of the Holy Spirit? Yes, it is possible, and that is our goal in our spiritual walk. But few can claim that they are entirely successful. It is helpful though, to understand the things that oppose, and the things that are helpful to our spiritual walk.

As the reading above states, the setting of our hearts and minds is a crucial factor in determining the nature of our spiritual walk. And because the mind is a crucial deciding factor, it becomes a battleground, where Satan, through his spirits, tries to captivate it by enticing carnal thoughts. This may result in lustful and covetous thoughts, fantasies and daydreams, resentments and judgments, and so on. Two things should be noted about this battle.

1. Not all thoughts are initiated by our own minds. Satan has the capacity to direct a thought into our mind. We may reject them, or entertain them and extend them until they captivate and control us for some time, even to the point of obsession.
2. All carnal thoughts close the door of our spirits to the Holy Spirit while they are operating. Even fantasies and daydreams seem to be a harmless way to entertain ourselves, but they too close the door of our spirits to the Holy Spirit while they are in operation. They are a type of foolish indulgence we often use as an escape from our present reality.

A Mind Open to Spiritual Truth

It is the Holy Spirit who reveals spiritual truth to us. Without His revelations, the bible is little more than a history book. But He does not reveal truth to us without our willing cooperation. He doesn't gatecrash our spirits. We have to have our hearts set towards desiring and seeking spiritual guidance, so that our 'spiritual' eyes, ears, and minds are predominately opened to the Spirit's office of imparting spiritual truth. Christ and Paul, used this same prophecy from Isaiah to condemn people who had their eyes and ears tuned to the flesh and the world instead of to the Spirit.

"Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.' "But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it." Matt 13:13-17 [Is 6:9-10].

Jesus issued this warning about the manner of our hearing: **"For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light. Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him."** Luke 8:17-18.

This next reading applies to Israel, God's appointed messenger to the pagan nations. Here Israel is compared to her pagan neighbours, and found to be just as blind and deaf. However, Isaiah's prophecy may be justly applied to the apostate church. She is 'perfect' in that she has all the conveniences, like the many bible translations, the interpretative tools, the church organizations and bible institutions—she has all at her disposal, but in most cases her servants or clerical leaders are blind and deaf.

“They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, [the pagan nations] who trust in carved images, who say to the moulded images, 'You are our gods.' “Hear, you deaf; and look, you blind, that you may see. Who is blind but My servant, or deaf as My messenger whom I send? Who is blind as he who is perfect [perfected in having all the necessary resources], and blind as the LORD'S servant? Seeing many things, but you do not observe; opening the ears, but he does not hear.” The LORD is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; he will exalt the law and make it honourable. But this is a people robbed and plundered; all of them are snared in holes, and they are hidden in prison houses; they are for prey, and no one delivers; for plunder, and no one says, "Restore!"” Isa 42:17-22. The last section of the reading graphically portrays the end result. The people in the apostate church are robbed of spiritual truth, plundered and imprisoned by spirits of darkness and deception.

How are people in the church ensnared into entrusting idols for their spiritual welfare? They are so captivated by the magnificent buildings, the clerical robes, the worldly titles like, ‘The Right Reverend ‘so and so’, Doctor of Divinity,’ that they blindly accept the words coming from the pulpit, without checking the registration of their spirits. The apostle John warned us of spiritual deception from those under the power of Antichrist, but he also told us that we have an anointing from the Holy Spirit to enable us to discern between error and truth. **“They [who were under the power of Antichrist] went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.”** I Jn 2:19-20. Our spirits must remain open to this anointing lest we be deceived through passivity.

The same openness to the Spirit is required when we read the bible. Without their eyes, ears, and mind open to the Spirit, most people read the bible as being totally literal, and fail to discern the hidden mysteries in its figurative language, as in its use of symbols, analogies, parallel prophecies, etc. Jesus chastised His own disciples for their spiritual unawareness when they thought He was speaking literally, when in fact He was using an analogy.

“Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread." But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? "Do you not yet understand, or remember [the lesson of] the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?-- but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Matt 16:5-11.

Many passages in the bible, like the ones below, are characterised by analogous language, which, with our own intellectual capacity, are impossible to understand. Those who are carnally minded merely skim over them. Those who are spiritually minded exercise their own spirits in discerning truth. They may use the various tools available to them—like spiritual teachers, commentaries, bible dictionaries, and lexicons, but whatever means they use, they must realize in their hearts that it is the Holy Spirit who ultimately gives discernment.

“... concerning the Word of life-- the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us...” I Jn 1:1-2

“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” I Jn 1:5-7.

“And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” I Jn 2:2-6

Make Your Spiritual Pathway Straight

All Christians should be on a pilgrimage of spiritual growth in holiness and LOVE, which draw us closer and closer to a personal knowledge of our union with the Lord, and Almighty God as our Father. Apathy about our spiritual walk leads to captivity by the world, or staleness and backsliding. Again, our spiritual walk is governed by the receptiveness of our spirits to the Holy Spirit, who directs our walk.

“My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.

Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart;

For they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh.

Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.

Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you.

Let your eyes look straight ahead [avoid covetousness, adultery etc], and your eyelids look right before you.

Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established.

Do not turn to the right or the left; remove your foot from evil.” Prov 4:20-27.

“Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees [by drawing on the life of Christ], and make straight paths for your feet [on your spiritual pilgrimage], so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled...” Heb 12:11.

God’s discipline is meant to train us so that we may be partakers of His holiness. But unless our spirits are tuned to the guidance of the Holy Spirit as to what is happening, and why it is happening, we are not trained by it, and our discipline is nothing more than a painful experience.

“Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” Heb 12:9-11.

Israel’s history is full of examples of her complacency in despising God’s discipline and chastening. They did not seek to know why they were being disciplined, and consequently were not corrected and turned back to Him that they might receive His blessings.

“Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD,

They would have none of my counsel and despised my every rebuke.

Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled to the full with their own fancies.” Prov 1:29-31.

“O LORD, are not Your eyes on the truth? You have stricken them, but they have not grieved; you have consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to return. Therefore I said, “Surely these are poor. They are foolish; for they do not know the way of the LORD, the judgment of their God.” Jer 5:3-4.

In some cases they did not even know that they were experiencing God's judgment.

“Who gave Jacob for plunder, and Israel to the robbers? Was it not the LORD, he against whom we have sinned? For they would not walk in His ways, nor were they obedient to His law. Therefore He has poured on him the fury of His anger and the strength of battle; it has set him on fire all around, yet he did not know; and it burned him, yet he did not take it to heart.” Isa 42:24-25.

A Patient and Quiet Spirit

If we are to maintain our spirits open to the Holy Spirit in the busyness of our work and the world, we must learn to develop quiet and calm spirits that are able to maintain their receptiveness. We must learn to work calmly, without haste and pressure—not setting deadlines, or predetermine the amount of work we will get done.

Our quiet times before the Lord are not so much about quieting our minds so that we may receive a ‘word’ from the Lord, but allowing our souls and spirits to settle into a state of calmness. We may regard the subjection of our souls into a state of quietness before God as an act of submissive worship. A calm spirit has God's commendation.

“Wives... Do not let your adornment be merely outward-- arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel-- rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.” 1 Pet 3:1-4.

“...the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools.” Eccl 7:8-9

“He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit.” Prov 17:27.

The Holy Spirit does not force Himself on us, and His ministry is one of quietness.

“Then He said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" I King 19:11-13.

Jesus likened the activity of the Holy Spirit to the unpredictable gentle blowing of a breeze. **“Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”** John 3:5-8. A receptive spirit is always open to changes in direction—in our attitudes, in our relationship and dealings with people, in our ministries, and in God's association with us.

Individual Growth in the Spirit

In the forty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel, the prophet presents a vision, which if taken literally and geographically, portrays an ever-increasing stream of water originating from the temple in Jerusalem, then flowing down the Jordan Valley to the Arabah wilderness, and finally emptying itself into the death-dealing waters of the Dead Sea.

Since the passage is obviously figurative, we must discern its true meaning by interpreting the significance of the symbols used. The basic symbol is water, in this case symbolising the Holy Spirit, flowing from the throne of God into the putrefying waters of the Dead Sea, a representation of the world and the apostate church in its corrupted state.

The first half of the vision describes the growing influence of the Holy Spirit on the individual person. As a result of his flesh being dealt with, his spirit is opened more and more to the input of the Spirit directing his life.

“Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the front of the temple faced east; the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar. He brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me around on the outside to the outer gateway that faces east; and there was water, running out on the right side. And when the man went out to the east with the line in his hand, he measured one thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the water came up to my ankles. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through the waters; the water came up to my knees. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through; the water came up to my waist. Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep, water in which one must swim, a river that could not be crossed. He said to me, “Son of man, have you seen this?” Ezek 47:1-5.

The first stage of the individual’s walk in the Spirit is likened to a man walking in water up to his ankles. The ankle-deep water, representing the influence of the Spirit, has but a little influence on the direction of his daily walk. The further measurements of one thousand cubits symbolise the passing of time. Later in his spiritual walk, more of his flesh has been surrendered to the power of the cross, and his own spirit has become more receptive to the input of the Spirit. Consequently, the degree of the influence of the Spirit on his daily walk is more pronounced, and is likened to walking through water up to the knees. After a further period of time, the water up to his waist shows us that the Spirit is now exerting considerable influence on his walk. The last is that stage of maturity in which the water is a river in which a person must swim. The Holy Spirit is able to exert a major influence on the direction on his spiritual walk, as the matured person ‘flows’ in union with the Spirit’s promptings.

The Influence of the Spirit on the Apostate Church and the World

The second part of Ezekiel’s vision describes the influence of the Holy Spirit on the surrounding banks, and finally its effect on the waters of “**the sea.**”

Then he brought me and returned me to the bank of the river. When I returned, there, along the bank of the river, were very many trees on one side and the other. Then he said to me: “This water flows toward the eastern region, goes down into the valley, and enters the sea. When it reaches the sea, its waters are healed.”

“And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes. It shall be that fishermen will stand by it from En Gedi to En Eglaim; they will be places for spreading their nets. Their fish will be of the same kinds as the fish of the Great Sea, exceedingly many. But its swamps and marshes will not be healed; they will be given over to salt. Along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all kinds of trees used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine.” Ezek 47:6-12.

The Sea

As stated previously, the sea is the Dead Sea, which is an analogy of the corrupt state of the world, and in particular, the apostate worldly church at the end of the age. As a whole, the picture is one of restoration of the Church in general at the close of the age, as the Spirit is poured out on the world. Other comparable biblical passages are Joel 3:18-21, and Zech 14:8-11.

To the Christian believer this passage from Ezekiel encourages us to believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit makes life, peace, healing, and prosperity available to us, as it flows from the throne of God.

The Banks

On the banks of the river, on either side, there were very many trees, which obviously have drawn their sustenance from the river's water, or the Holy Spirit. Trees are often used in the Scriptures as symbols for people. In this case the trees symbolise the ministries of Christ, formed in chosen people from His body of believers. They provide the spiritual fruit of healing and health, teaching, deliverance, or any fulfilment of the needs of the rest of His body—all worked and sustained by the power of the Holy Spirit. Their fruit is formed every month, showing that these ministries never cease in their operation.

The Fishermen

“There will be a very great multitude of fish [people open to salvation], because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes. It shall be that fishermen will stand by it from En Gedi to En Eglaim; they will be places for spreading their nets.” Wherever Holy Spirit goes He will induce spiritual life, growth, and healing. The outpouring of the Spirit will be accompanied by a large increase of anointed evangelists, pictured here as fishermen. Jesus said to His disciples, **“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”** Matt 4:19-20.

The Swamps and Marshes

“But its swamps and marshes will not be healed; they will be given over to salt.” The swamps and the marshes are the ‘churches’ or people who are blind and deaf to the Spirit, and are entrenched in apostasy. Consequently they will remain in their corrupted state.

Our Spirits Should be Consistently Faithful

Throughout the Scriptures, the attribute of enduring faithfulness is treasured much by God. In Christ's letter to the Church at Philadelphia, it was not that they were spiritually strong and alive that gained His commendation, but the fact that they faithfully endured, and kept His name.

“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, ‘He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts [the doorway to ministries], and shuts and no one opens’”: “I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not [those in the false church], but lie -- indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet [I will vindicate you], and to know that I have loved you. Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.” Rev 3:7-12.

Enduring spiritual faithfulness can only be maintained by maintaining our spirits in an open, spiritual healthy, receptive state—by being continually strengthened and refilled by the Holy Spirit. **“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be [continually] filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** Eph 5:18-20. God looks to those who are faithful in spirit to serve Him.

“My eyes shall be on the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with Me; he who walks in a perfect way, he shall serve Me.” Ps 101:6

“Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.” 1 Cor 4:2

“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry....” 1 Tim 1:12

“Then everyone came whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and they brought the LORD'S offering for the work of the tabernacle of meeting, for all its service, and for the holy garments.” Exod 35:21

“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” 2 Tim 2:2

“These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.” Rev 17:14

He who has a faithful spirit shows discretion. **“A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter.”** Prov 11:13.

And finally, **“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”** Rev 2:10.

To be faithful in spirit, it is necessary for us to set our hearts in that direction, just as Jesus **“steadfastly set His face [or heart] to go to Jerusalem,”** [Lk] 9:51], to undergo the agony of the cross.

The opposite is a faithless heart. **“And may not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not set its heart aright, and [as a result] whose spirit was not faithful to God.”** Ps 78:8

A Mind Taken Over by the World and Fleshly Desires

Our minds, in their unsaved state are carnal, being held captive by fleshly desires and worldly pursuits. When we are saved, and have set our hearts aright, our minds are continually open to our spirits being influenced by the Holy Spirit. They are consecrated to God, and enabled by the Spirit to know the mind and will of God.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Rom 12:1-2.

On the other hand, the unregenerate mind is surrendered to the desires of the flesh, and never rises above worldly thoughts and attitudes. Consequently, they are a continual target for Satan’s intrusions, and are in danger of being continually taken over.

“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Gen 6:5-6.

We Should Develop a Personal Relationship With the Holy Spirit

A personal relationship with the Holy Spirit is dependant on our knowledge of who He is, and how He operates. At first this may appear to be a diversion from the main topic of maintaining our spirits. But our personal spiritual growth, and the development and maintenance of our spirits, are wrought through the workings of the Holy Spirit. If we are to be in tune with His operations, it is important to know how He works in us.

Because of the lawless excesses of some high profile spiritual leaders who ‘call down the Spirit’ in an endeavour to experience spiritual manifestations, [which are in fact lying wonders from the spirit of Antichrist], many of us are deterred from praying to the Spirit, or developing a personal relationship with Him. But it is good to pray to the Spirit, showing our appreciation of His many blessings. The key to the validity of our prayers is that we do not extend them beyond His rightful ministry to us. Jesus outlined his office to us before His ascension.

He is The Spirit of the Father and The Spirit of Christ.

First of all we should understand His relationship to God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Although He is a separate entity, He is also called ‘the Spirit of God,’ and ‘the Spirit of Christ.’

“Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.” 1 Cor 2:11.

“But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.” Matt 10:19-20.

“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” Rom 8:9-10.

The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ because, He represents them to us by doing their will and work in us. Because He is one with the Father and Son, He is able to reveal their wills to us. He directs our spiritual path towards receiving the fullness of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ in us, and entering into the abiding presence and rest of God.

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.” John 16:13-15.

**“But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man**

The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

“But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” 1 Cor 2:9-14.

The Holy Spirit does not glorify Himself, or speak on His own authority. He represents God and Jesus Christ to us, revealing their will, presenting their words, and glorifying their name to us. That is why calling down the Spirit to exhibit His power and glorify Himself is so wrong. It is scripturally invalid, and puts His ministry into disrepute.

He Assures Us of the Love and Acceptance of God and Jesus Christ

The Holy Spirit assures us that we are God's children. **“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out," Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God”... Rom 8:14-16.**

And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Gal 4:6-7

The presence of the Spirit in us assures us that we are accepted by Christ. **“By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.” 1 John 4:13-14.**

The presence of the Spirit in us assures us that God has anointed us and established us in Christ. **“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” 2 Cor 1:21-22.**

The presence of the Spirit in us assures us that we are eternally saved. **“For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.” 2 Cor 5:4-5.**

The Holy Spirit is an ever-increasing power of eternal life in those who are growing spiritually in Jesus Christ. **“...but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water [the Holy Spirit] that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.” John 4:14.**

The Holy Spirit is also a source of power that flows out from us when we minister to others. **“On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone**

thirsts, let him come to Me and drink [continually receive the infilling of the Spirit]. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water [to minister to others].” But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive” John 7:37-39.

He Delivers Us From Evil Spirits

In explaining the power to cast demons out of others, Jesus said, **“But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.”** Matt 12:28.

He Guides Us in Our Daily Walk

**“Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying,
"This is the way, walk in it,"
Whenever you turn to the right hand
Or whenever you turn to the left.”** Isa 30:21.

**“The humble He guides in justice,
And the humble He teaches His way.**

All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth...” Ps 25:9-10.

**“Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in the morning,
For in You do I trust;
Cause me to know the way in which I should walk,
For I lift up my soul to You.”** Ps 143:8.

**“Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.”** Prov 3:5-6.

**“I will bring the blind by a way they did not know;
I will lead them in paths they have not known.
I will make darkness light before them,
And crooked places straight.
These things I will do for them,
And not forsake them.”** Isa 42:16.

**“I am the LORD your God,
Who teaches you to profit,
Who leads you by the way you should go.”** Isa 48:17
**“The LORD will guide you continually,
And satisfy your soul in drought...”** Isa 58:11

The Ways the Holy Spirit Guides Us

The short answer is, by whatever way He chooses in His wisdom, that suits our circumstances. It may be by any one of these ways:

Intuition

A still small voice

Providence

Correction

Conscience

A prophecy

A ‘word of knowledge,’ or ‘word of wisdom.’

A direct command:

“Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.” Acts 16:6.-

“As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Acts 13:2.

“So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia...” Acts 13:4.

“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” Acts 20:28. Even though it may appear as if the Holy Spirit Himself was directing the Church, it was as the Lord prophesied, “He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.” John 16:13-15.

By being a source of joy, comfort, love, and hope to those under tribulation:

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Rom 15:13.

“Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.” Acts 9:31.

“Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” Rom 5:5.

Enlightenment in interpreting the Scriptures:

“...knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” 2 Peter 1:20-21.

A direct intervention in our circumstances. For instance, to gain his attention, Moses was confronted with a burning bush.

By opening our spiritual eyes and ears to see the circumstances as they really are—for instance, to know why a person is speaking in such a manner and to know the true state of their hearts. Of course we never see as God sees, but are given enough insight to minister to a person in their circumstances. **“But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.” 1 John 2:27.** This reading does not state that we have no need for spiritual teachers, because the ministry of pastor- teacher was presented to the Church by the Lord. (Eph 4:11).

He is the Creator and Sustaining Power of Life:

**“The Spirit of God has made me,
And the breath of the Almighty gives me life.” Job 33:4.**

“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.” Rom 8:11.

He is God’s Instrument in Delivering Us From the Power of Our Flesh

“For 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.

“I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” Matt 3:11-12.

“When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning...” Isa 4:4-5.

“But the fruit of the Spirit [created through refinement] is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” Gal 5:22-23.

The Holy Spirit Anoints Our Prayers and Intercedes for Us

“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He [God] who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” Rom 8:26-27.

“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints...” Eph 6:17-18.

“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” Jude 20-23.

“And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.” Eph 2:17-18.

“You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”? James 4:2-5.

The Holy Spirit Distributes Spiritual Gifts to Help Us in Ministering to Others

“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.” 1 Cor 12:4-11.

The first thing to note about the above reading is that the whole Trinity is involved in spiritually equipping us, and directing our ministries.

The Holy Spirit chooses, and distributes spiritual gifts to individual people as He wills.

The Lord forms ministries in whom He chooses, and presents them as a gift to the Church. [Eph 4:11]

Almighty God “**works all in all,**” or directs the overall work, in His sovereign will directing its manner, its scope, and its area of activity. Eg. The area and scope of a spiritual revival—as in the revival in Wales at the turn of the last century.

The apostle Peter enjoined us to use the gift or ministry allotted to us. “**Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.**” 1 Peter 4:9-10. Jesus issued a stern warning to those who were blessed with spiritual gifts and ‘buried them in the ground.’

“Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.'... 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' Matt 25:24-25, & 29-30.

WALK WITH ENDURANCE THE PATH SET BEFORE US

Setting our hearts to walk after the Spirit is vital, but it is of little value if our commitment is shallow and eventually wanes. We must have an enduring commitment to walk after the Spirit to ensure our continued spiritual growth.

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith...” Heb 12:1-2

**"Come out from among them
And be separate, says the Lord.
Do not touch what is unclean,
And I will receive you."
I will be a Father to you,
And you shall be My sons and daughters,
Says the LORD Almighty."**

“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” 2 Cor 6:16-7:1.

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.” 1 Thess 5:23-24.

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” 1 Cor 6:19-7:1.

FINAL SUMMARY

The opening bible readings present two opposite ways of walking in the world.

The first is to walk in the light of the Holy Spirit in us, allowing Him to control our lives. This manner of walking leads to spiritual life and peace, resulting in a sense of fulfillment.

The second is to walk after the flesh, or allowing the desires of the flesh and the world to control our conduct and way of life. This manner of walking leads to spiritual death, accompanied by a lack of real contentment, peace, and of purpose.

The thrust of this study is to ascertain how we might live out each day in tune with the Spirit, and experience the practical working of the life of the Lord Jesus in our lives.

The two readings point to the set of our minds and hearts in determining the manner of our walk. To walk after the Spirit, we have to have our minds and hearts set towards a spiritual manner of living. This is a deliberate choice, or act of the will. In all aspects of life, it is the set of our hearts that determines the outcome of our way of life. The set of our hearts determines whether we embark on a spiritual pathway of refinement and holiness, or become entangled in the world, putting our eternal salvation in jeopardy. The Holy Spirit answers to the set of our hearts rather than to the words of our mouths.

The path of refinement is the path of the cross, accepting the refining work of the Lord, and being trained by it. The path of the cross is only briefly mentioned in this study, for its main thrust is maintaining of our spirits in a state of receptiveness to the input of the Holy Spirit, who embarks us on our spiritual pathway, leading to the knowledge of the Lord and entering into the kingdom of heaven.

We are told to “take heed to our spirits.” We are responsible for the health, strength, and openness of our spirits. We keep our spirits healthy by maintaining purity in our consciences, and guarding minds from the intrusions of Satan. We must turn our backs on the enticing temptations of the flesh and the world. We should agree to be “crucified to the world, and the world to us.” We

must develop a quiet and gentle spirit, preventing the cares and pressures of the world from intruding in our relationship with the Holy Spirit.

We strengthen our spirits by exercising them in prayer, praise and worship, and by meeting together in the Lord and by partaking in communion. We must seek the Holy Spirit's guidance and anointing of our readings, studies, and prayers.

In our spiritual walk, our progress is marked by the fruits of the Spirit we bear-- love, joy, peace, longsuffering or patient endurance, kindness, goodness, righteousness, faithfulness and humility.

Since the Holy Spirit is the organ through which we have contact with the Lord Jesus Christ and Almighty God, enabling them to work in us, it is essential that we learn to know how the Holy Spirit operates, and to develop a personal relationship with Him.

He is the Spirit of the God and the Spirit of Jesus Christ, being their instruments through whom they work their will in us. He is a Spirit of love, comfort and life in us. He guides us through our spiritual pathway, and teaches us and anoints us to do the work of the Lord.

It is required of all of God's servants that they be faithful, and to trust Him to maintain the sanctity of their spirits, souls, and bodies.