The Spirit of Jesus

If you are just joining us, we started last Sunday into a new series on the person, passion and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

And though, throughout this study we will be looking at and learning from a lot of different portions of scripture, Galatians 5:25 is something of a guiding verse for us – where the apostle Paul says – "*Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*"

"*Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit*."

That's a simple verse – one we could all easily memorize.

But what does it mean?

What does Paul **mean** when he says that those who are in Christ "*live by the Spirit"*, and **what does it mean** to *keep in step with the Spirit*? **What would that look like – in your life and mine.**

That's the reason for this study – the reason why we **need** to take a season and talk together about the Holy Spirit and Life in the Spirit – because the Spirit is not just some point of fascination for us, or some interesting doctrine for us understand, or something of concern solely for those who have special leadership responsibilities.

No, the Spirit – **the *Holy Spirit*** – **is the One who gives us life** – ***who draws us into the life of God***. The Spirit is the One who moves us from beliefs to **living** faith – to ***experienced*** faith – to

knowing God and life with God ***personally***. As Paul says, "*we live **by the Spirit**…*"

And yet sadly, often our thinking about the Holy Spirit has been or is kind of fuzzy, vague, unclear.

We may sing, "*Holy Spirit, you are welcome here. Come flood this place, fill the atmosphere. Your Glory God is what our hearts long for, to be overcome by your presence, Lord.*"

That's a **beautiful** prayer – ***but what does it mean*?**

Or what do **WE** mean by it?

We sing, "*Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me… melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.*"

Again, a great prayer for us to pray – **but what does it mean?** What are we praying for? What would that look like if it were to happen? If God's Spirit was to *melt us, mold us, fill us, use us*?

What are we asking or expecting the Spirit to do?

And more importantly – ***What does the Spirit want to do? What does the Holy Spirit desire, long to do – in you, in me, in us?***

What is the work of the Spirit?

J.I. Packer, in one of the opening chapters of his book Knowing God, wrote years ago: "*Most Christians are not in doubt as to the work that Christ did; they know that He redeemed men by his atoning*

death… But the average Christian is in a complete fog as to ***what work the Holy Spirit does****.*"

Which is probably the case for some of us, and for a number of reasons.

For some, this is simply because of a lack of teaching on the Holy Spirit. For others of us, it's because we've rejected the teaching we've receive, but didn't replace it with what the Bible really teaches about the Spirit. For others of us, we've only been taught about the Spirit in really vague ways.

Sadly, I think many of the **songs** we sing in the church have contributed to this.

I don't know if you've ever considered this, but we have a lot of songs about **Jesus** – great songs – that speak of and celebrate his character and will, work and ways. That celebrate what He has done. That declare that He is loving and gracious. Humble and powerful. Merciful. Just. Lord.

[i.e. ***What a Beautiful Name*** – "*You were the Word at the beginning. One with God the Lord Most High. Your hidden glory in creation, now revealed in You our Christ…"*]

And we have a lot of songs about the **Father** – that speak of His compassion and tenderness, his sovereignty and faithfulness, his

wisdom. That declare and celebrate Him as Creator and as the One who loves the world so much that He sent His Son.

[I.e. ***Great is Thy Faithfulness***, *O God my Father, there is no shadow of turning with Thee*…]

But when it comes to songs about the **Spirit**, we end up with a lot of open-ended pleas, don't we? [*Come, come, Holy Spirit, come*…] – and with lots of vague metaphors – most of them biblical – but vague nonetheless – impersonal – asking for the Spirit to come like rain, like fire, like a wind. To melt us, mold us, fill us, and use us.

And as a result, though we may sing with great passion, I often wonder if we know what we are asking for, and if we really want it?

I remember, years ago, preparing to lead worship for an Alpha weekend retreat on the Holy Spirit – and being ***struck with this gap***.

The whole purpose of the retreat was to help people learn about the Spirit, to realize their need for the Spirit, and to come to Jesus to be filled with the Spirit – and yet I couldn't find **any** songs that actually said **anything** about the person and work of the Spirit. Just songs that said that we need the Spirit, or we want the Spirit, or that talked about his power – being *like the wind, or a flood, or a fire*.

And then there's the **Doxology** – which many of us love. "*Praise God from whom all blessings flow, praise Him all creatures here below*…" I love singing the Doxology , and knowing that so many

have sung it before… But then the verse ends with this exhortation to praise the Trinity – "Praise Father, Son and Holy… **Ghost**."

I know it's what the King James says, but ***the Holy Spirit IS NOT a Ghost***… and never has been... I cringe every time I hear it.

For some of us, songs like this – songs that refer to the Holy Spirit as the Holy **Ghost** – have just re-inforced to us that the Spirit is elusive, undefined, impersonal, and unknowable… ***and maybe even undesirable*.** I mean, honestly, who wants to be filled with a ghost, baptized with a ghost, led by a ghost? Talk about freaky, and odd, and impersonal, and ***confusing***…

And as a result, I have known many Christians whose **confusion** has led to a certain degree of **concern** or **nervousness** about the Spirit… nervousness of focusing too much on the Spirit… of submitting too much to the Spirit… of experiencing too much of the Spirit…

And, in truth, I say this because this was my own experience…

I grew up in churches where I learned a fair amount of what the Bible said about the Spirit, but all with this subtle or not-so-subtle caution to not give too much attention to the Spirit. **Just focus on Jesus.** For fear that I'd end up running off with the Spirit and losing Jesus.

And in my college years, I began to grapple with the person and work of the Spirit ***in my own life***. Paul's words in **Galatians 5:25** &

Romans 8:9 gripped me. I began to realize that the Holy Spirit is not a marginal matter or character in the Christian life – but is actually ***central*** *and* ***essential***…

And yet as I did this, as I began to ask questions, to study scripture, and pray about the Spirit's life in me, I remember feeling this tension deeply, this wrestling, this fear. And I pleaded with God – I have it written in my journal – *"Father God, don't let me get off track."* Father, **guard** me – don't let me get off base.

As though the Holy Spirit couldn't really be trusted. As though the Holy Spirit might turn me into some sort of crazy person.

You know what I'm talking about…

I didn't want to end up like that guy who walked around my Christian university campus wearing a burlap sack and sandals, and who would jump around during worship times (like he was on a pogo stick), and who couldn't engage in normal conversations – cause he was ***so spiritual***.

That was what I feared might happen to **me** if I got too serious about the Holy Spirit. That I'd end up somehow crossing the line from seeking to be godly to being "crazy" – loopy – "spiritual" (and I wouldn't know it).

Have you ever had those thoughts – concerns – fears about "life in the Spirit"?

I know I did.

But I don't any longer… Because of what I've learned **from Jesus** about the Holy Spirit (particularly in John 14-16).

For the more I've studied what the Bible, and specifically what Jesus actually teaches about the Spirit, and with this, the more I have sought to follow Jesus in dependence upon the Spirit, the more I've come to see the vital relationship between **the Holy Spirit and Jesus**. So much so that at in Acts 16:7 (as well as in Phlippians 1:19) the Holy Spirit is referred to as "*the Spirit of Jesus*".

And we need to understand this – because knowing this changes so much. I know it has for me. Putting to rest any **fears** that I had about the Holy Spirit – and making my heart **thankful** and **hungry** for the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit in my life and in yours.

And though I normally am not a **three-point** preacher – I want to actually pull together three core ideas – realities – that need to inform the foundation of our understanding of the Holy Spirit and His will and work in our lives. And they all have to do with this vital relationship between the Holy Spirit and Jesus.

So **FIRST**, we need to understand that **Jesus is the unique Man of the Spirit.**

And by that, I mean that when we think of the life of Jesus– the life that He lived on earth – we need to not just write it off as *the life*

Jesus lived ***because He was God***. But we need to understand it as *the life Jesus lived* ***in and by the power of the Spirit***.

This is what all the gospels tell us.

In Matthew, Mark and Luke, just as Jesus' public ministry is beginning, we see Jesus going down to the Jordan to be baptized by John the Baptist.

And in **Matthew 3:16** we're told, "*As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.*"

And in the next scene, were told that "*Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted…*"

Matthew, Mark and Luke's gospels **all** introduce the ministry of Jesus in the same way.

Luke's gospel, in particular, is **filled** with references to the Spirit's presence and ministry in Jesus' life. Almost everything He does is said to be done ***by the Spirit.***

And in **Luke 4:18**, Jesus declares this ***of himself***.

Having "*returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit…*" Jesus then went to Nazareth and upon entering the synagogue, he was handed the scroll of Isaiah, stood and read,

> **"*The Spirit of the Lord is on me,***
> *because he has* ***anointed me***

to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for prisoners
And recovery of sight for the blind,
To set the oppressed free,
To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And then he sat down and said, "*Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.*"

In other words: *I am this Man. I am the man* ***on whom the Spirit has been placed***.

And we need to see this – to grasp that Jesus' life is the clearest picture, the fullest example of what life in the Spirit looks like. Of what it looks like and means to be **filled** with the Spirit, and **led** by the Spirit, and **alive** in and with the Spirit.

Which is what the early Christian meant when they referred to Jesus as **the Christ** – or as **the Messiah**! These are just Greek and Hebrew words for the "Anointed One". The One on whom and in whom the Spirit dwells.

Jesus' life is the perfect example of what life in the Spirit looks like. Not John the Baptist. Not the crazy guy who roamed my university campus in a burlap sack. But ***Jesus***.

Which means if you want to know what Life in the Spirit means and looks like – **look at Jesus' life.**

And I think you'd agree: there was nothing crazy, bizarre, out of touch, off-putting about Jesus. Just the **opposite** – He embodied all

that we admire and respect and are drawn to. His life is humbling to assess.

And all of it – His character. His actions. His love. His selflessness. His wisdom. His restraint in the face of the evil of others. His response to injustice. His intimacy with the Father. His acts of power. ***All of this*** came about in and by the Spirit.

Why would we be nervous of the Spirit – the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of Jesus – having full reign in us?

This alone should cause us to cry out: "Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me! On us!"

SECOND, not only is Jesus the unique man of the Spirit, but He is also the unique **Giver** of the Spirit…

We see this all throughout the Bible – but most clearly we hear it from the lips of John the Baptist.

In **John 1:32**, we're told

Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain ***is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit****.'"*

And later, in John's gospel, Jesus Himself says that the Spirit will come **at His request**.

John 14:16 – "*And **I will ask the Father**, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever – the Spirit of truth.*"

John 15:26 – "*When the Advocate comes, whom **I will send to you** from the Father…*"

John 16:7f – Jesus says to his disciples – "*But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, **I will send him** to you.*"

Do you hear what Jesus is saying? That not only is He the One who gives us the Spirit, but He ***longs*** for us to know and experience and cherish the presence and ministry of the Spirit.

So, why would we ever be nervous about the Spirit's presence and ministry…?

Think about it: Jesus would not send us the Spirit – and even more than that, *hand over much of His ministry to the Spirit* – **unless** He was **convinced** that the Spirit's presence and ministry was **for our good.**

Which is exactly what He says – to his disciples (and to us).

John 16:7f – "*But very truly I tell you, **it is for your good** that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, **I will send him to you**.*"

*Why was I so nervous that the Holy Spirit would steer me away from Jesus – **when it is Jesus himself** who longs for us – for you and me – to receive and know and experience the presence and ministry of the Spirit!*

Yet again – this alone should cause us to cry out: "Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me! On us!"

Ok, THIRD (lastly), not only is Jesus the unique **Man** of the Spirit, and the unique **Giver** of the Spirit, but Jesus is the unique **Object** of the Spirit's ministry…

And by that I mean that rather than pulling us away from or distracting us from Jesus, the whole purpose and **passion** of the Holy Spirit is to lead us to Jesus, to awaken us to Jesus and His gospel, to remind of what Jesus has taught, to apply the gospel of Jesus to our hearts, and to bring forth the life of Jesus in us.

And I say this because this is what **Jesus tells us** in John 14-16… Listen to what Jesus says of the Holy Spirit – **John 14:26f**.

"*But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name will teach you all things and will remind you of everything* ***I have said to you***."

Right there, Jesus makes this intimate connection between His ministry and that of the Holy Spirit. That the work of the Spirit is to teach and remind us of everything that **Jesus** has already taught and revealed.

John 15:26f – Jesus says…

"*When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father – the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father –* ***he will testify about me.***"

John 16:13f

"*But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.* ***He will glorify me*** *because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you*."

This is why Jesus so desires the Spirit's presence and ministry in us and among us. Because it is the Holy Spirit who comes to comfort and counsel us with the words and wisdom of Jesus… to teach and remind us of everything that Jesus has revealed… to testify to us about Jesus… to guide us into the truth of Jesus… to speak to us about Jesus and on behalf of Jesus… ***to glorify Jesus…***

Oh why would we, who follow Jesus, ever shy away from the Spirit's presence and ministry – for the Holy Spirit comes ***in the name of Jesus!***

As Jesus says - **John 14:26** – "*The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name…*"

In my name – Jesus says. To bear His influence among us. To represent His interests and desires and will to us, and among us, and in us… To glorify Jesus. To lead us more deeply into His Life… to bring forth His life and passions and ways – in us.

This is why I no longer am nervous about the Spirit's presence and ministry in me and in others. In truth, I **pray** for, **long** for, and **celebrate** the Spirit's presence and work in me, in you, and in us. I

still get nervous about what ***others*** want the Spirit to do – but not about what the Spirit wants to do… For the consuming passion of the Holy Spirit is simply and graciously to glorify Jesus in me and in you – and through me and through you… ***And that is what we need.***

In a way, the question for us in the series – **the question the <u>Spirit</u> would ask** – is not: *Do you know the Spirit?* [though that is a valid question]. But:

Do you know and trust and love and live in Jesus?

Cause this is why the Spirit comes. This is why **Jesus** has sent us His Spirit – that the Holy Spirit, now alive in us, would continually awaken us to Jesus… teach us about Jesus… inspire us to trust Jesus… lead us in the way of Jesus… and bring forth in us the life of Jesus.

Let's pray…

Oh Jesus, fill us with your Spirit again today – that He might lead us to You… to know You more… to hear Your voice and follow you… to love You more and know Your love… and to live in You… For Your glory, for the sake of the world, and our joy in you…

And so today, the Spirit calls us to the Table…

Let us come to Jesus – who gives us the Spirit
That the Spirit might lead us back to and more deeply into the heart of Jesus…