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NOT LIKE CASPER AT ALL

John 15:26-16:15

It is distressing to talk to my son, Toby, about our medical system. He says it is broken. I have no trouble believing that. There’s a famous song about trying to get a timely appointment with a doctor these days. It’s that Broadway classic, *The Impossible Dream*. My personal belief is that what so many political leaders push as the solution is actually a big part of the problem. That’s health insurance. I no doubt oversimplify the issue, but at one time in regard to medical treatment there were 2 parties, a patient in need of care, and a doctor who provided it. Then some Nimrod came up with health insurance. Now instead of 2 parties there are 3, a patient, an insurance company and a doctor. Here’s the key factor. The insurance company brings nothing to that equation except a need to make a profit. They’re going to take money out, which means inevitably the patient will pay more and the doctor will get less so they can both contribute to the insurance company.

Laurie and I once did our part to try to rectify that situation. We sued our health insurance company. The weird thing about that is we didn’t know that we sued them. We were surprised when we were notified by some lawyers that we had been included in a class action against our health insurance company and that they had agreed to a settlement and we should expect to receive our portion of it soon. I bring this up because I was ignorant of the fact that I was entitled to something and was completely unaware of the resource that was actually mine. This is important because the same thing is true of many Christians. There is a resource that is ours in Christ that some live as though totally unaware of it. We are going to learn about that resource today as we look at John 15:26-16:16.

We did get our share of the settlement. It amounted to the grand sum of $3.12. Yeah, we really made that insurance company pay. I’ll bet they’re sorry they messed with us. Fortunately the resource we are going to learn about today is way different, for it is real and powerful.

THE HOLY SPIRIT:

IS BETTER FOR US

In these verses Jesus returned to a theme he had spoken of earlier in 14:15-26. The message is that while Jesus was leaving his disciples, he was not abandoning them. He would give his followers someone that is called “the Advocate” in the NIV text. Some translations use “Counselor,” some just transliterate the Greek word and give us “paraclete.” The expression meant someone called alongside us. Only in this case Jesus had said in 14:17 “He lives with you and will be in you.” Jesus was sending his Spirit to live inside his followers.

This “advocate” that he was referring to is most commonly known today as the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ. This fulfilled prophecies from Ezekiel and Joel who both said when the new covenant comes God would actually put his Spirit inside his people.

The Holy Spirit is a topic some people just avoid because he is both mysterious and controversial. There has been and continues to be controversy about just what the work of the Spirit is, what we should expect to experience of him and how one actually experiences the Holy Spirit. Some people claim the Holy Spirit’s work is to produce miracles like speaking in tongues, healings, amazing prophecies and other astounding things. The implication is if you don’t see those in your life then the Spirit isn’t at work in you. There have been ludicrous excesses like people being taken over by “holy laughter” or being supposedly “Slain in the Spirit,” things that have no biblical basis whatsoever. There have been times when some people claiming to be taken over by the Spirit go outside and bark like dogs. It’s hard to see how such things bring honor to God’s name.

Just the idea of a Holy Spirit is uncomfortable for many in our supposedly “scientific” society, where if you can’t test it in a lab, measure it or see it, it cannot be true. It’s just superstition. Talking about the Holy Spirit makes some believers uncomfortable because they don’t feel like they understand him and they don’t feel like they actually experience his work. We should not be surprised that the whole topic seems a bit mystical to us. Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3 that the Spirit is like the wind. We don’t know exactly where it comes from, we don’t control it, we can’t see it, we can only see its effects.

Sometimes you might hear someone refer to the Holy Spirit as “it.” The Spirit is a person. He is one of the persons of the Trinity, just as much a personal being as the Father and the Son. I doubt any of us would refer to Jesus as “it.” The Holy Spirit is as much a person as Jesus. He is, as Jesus was, fully God, with all the attributes of God. He is worthy of our worship and praise just as is the Father and the Son. I’d appreciate it if you wouldn’t refer to me as an “it,” and I suspect the Holy Spirit would feel the same.

Verse 7 is a crucial statement. Jesus said, “It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go I will send him to you.” Jesus claimed having his Spirit in them, was going to be better for them than having Jesus physically present with them. Have you ever noticed that often when someone says to you, “It’ll be good for you” it’s something you won’t like? Eat your kale and broccoli. It’s good for you. No one ever has to say, “Eat your ice cream sundae. It’ll be good for you.” There was a critical moment in Laurie’s and my relationship. It happened the day we got engaged to be married. Neither of us imagined that we would get engaged that day. We had decided the night before that we needed to go our separate ways, that there was no real future for us. That morning, due to unforeseen events, we ended up together. I was heartbroken, but wanted to encourage Laurie. So I talked about all the things that she would do in coming days. I was essentially saying, “This will be good for you.” I assumed she was thinking the same thing. I had no idea that as I was talking she was thinking, “This isn’t going to be better for me. All those things are fine. They are good, positive things, but I’m going to have to do them without him, and I can’t stand that idea. What I want is him!” We were engaged not long after that.

I have no doubt that the disciples were thinking, “This isn’t going to be better for us. We’re going to be without him. How could that possibly be better for us?” That was unfathomable. It is even today hard to accept. Don’t you think life as a Christian would be a lot easier if Jesus were physically with you?

Consider how different life would be if you could be with Jesus physically. Two weeks ago our oldest granddaughter, Ella, was having a horse riding lesson. She has gotten very good at riding horses, but it makes me nervous to think of that almost 8 year old girl sitting on a big horse. Sure enough, that day something spooked the horse and it bucked her off, then stepped on her. She ended up spending the night at Children’s Hospital with a lacerated kidney. She’s all right, but there were some tense moments in there that could have been disastrous. I have to think it would have been much easier if Jesus were with us. Knowing he could heal her if there were any serious issues would make things a lot more peaceful.

I used to like flying, but now I see it as something to be endured. There is always the threat of a problem cropping up. When you’re strapped into a pressurized metal tube 35,000 feet in the air problems are deeply unsettling. But suppose Jesus was physically right with you. That’s the one time that the 3-3 seating arrangement would seem like a good idea. There’d be a seat for Laurie, one for me and one for Jesus. If some problem did occur, I wouldn’t stress over it. Hey Jesus is right there. He’ll take care of it. No problem. I have to think my prayer life would be better if Jesus were physically with me. I would just talk to him. I’m pretty sure walking by faith would be a lot easier, because it wouldn’t take as much faith. I could see Jesus, so I could walk by sight and faith.

How could it be better to have the Holy Spirit in us than to have Jesus physically with us? There is the obvious matter of physical limitations if Jesus were here. There would be only one Jesus to go around. Imagine if we all were trying to literally follow Jesus. It would get cumbersome in a hurry, since there are billions of Christians on the planet. But Jesus went on to explain there were some things that the Holy Spirit will do that are better than what Jesus did.

IS CONVINCING

Verses 8-11 tell us about some of the work the Holy Spirit does. But those verses have been the subject of considerable disagreement and discussion over the centuries. What exactly did Jesus mean and how is that a help? Jesus said the Holy Spirit will “prove the world to be in the wrong about sin, righteousness and judgment.” What does that mean, and how is that better than what Jesus did while he was here? How does it help us?

The Greek word translated “prove” is a bit more nuanced than that. Proving the world wrong just sounds like, “I was right and you were wrong so I can sing the I was right song.” It’s about winning the argument. That’s not what Jesus intended. The word used here could also be translated “convince” or “convict.” It has the idea of persuading a person and bringing that individual to a point of decision. So it’s not just about proving people are wrong, but about working in their hearts to see where they are wrong and come to a point of change.

Jesus went on to elucidate about what he said, but his explanation kind of leaves us scratching our heads. It certainly leaves scholars disagreeing and debating the meaning. It helped me get a feel for what Jesus meant when I realized a point of vocabulary from Greek. Verses 9-10 say, “about sin because people do not believe in me, about righteousness, because I am going to the Father…and about judgment because the prince of the world now stands condemned.” What helped me is that the Greek word translated “because” can also mean simply “that.”

Jesus said the Spirit will convince the world about sin, that they don’t believe in Jesus, about righteousness, that he has gone to the Father, and about judgment, that the prince of the world now stands condemned. So the Spirit will convince people that in not believing in Jesus they have sinned, that Jesus has gone to the Father, thus proving his righteousness, his true identity, and that Satan has been defeated and thus judgment is coming and Jesus is the one doing the judging. In other words, the Spirit will convince people that they had better put their faith in Jesus.

How is that better than what Jesus did, and how is that a help to us? Jesus had just dumped his world changing mission on the disciples. He was saying, “I’m leaving, but you guys can take it from here.” He’s told them they need to testify about him, take word about him to the world. They’re thinking, “Uh, we can’t do that.” I know that because it’s what I think. You’re kidding, right Jesus? I’m supposed to make disciples of all nations, to the ends of the earth. I can’t do that. Not like Jesus did. Jesus’ answer to that is, “No, you can’t. But I’m going to give you my Spirit, and he can do what you can’t. He can convince the world about sin, righteousness and judgment.”

There is a great example of this in Acts 2. That chapter tells the story of what happened on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out for the first time. When some dramatic events drew a crowd that wondered what was going on, Peter began to tell them about Jesus. In verse 23 after he had mentioned the signs, miracles and wonders Jesus did, Peter said, “You, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to a cross.” In verse 36 he said, “Let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

These people had seen Jesus heal, do miraculous things, even raise a man from the dead. They had heard him preach powerful truth and astound even their most scholarly religious leaders. And they rejected him. They were complicit in his murder by the Romans. Now Peter preaches a sermon in which he said, “Jesus was the Messiah, he proved it by his works that you saw, and you killed him.” Now there’s a message certain to win hearts and minds. “You rejected and killed the Messiah we’ve been waiting for hundreds of years. So you stink.” A speaker must connect with his audience if he wants to win them over. He needs to win their hearts. Peter’s message was just the opposite. How do people usually respond to being told they’re terrible human beings? I would expect that to be very unpopular.

But look what happened. Verse 37 says, “When the people heard this they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’” Peter told them to change their minds about Jesus, to put their faith in him and be baptized in his name. Verse 41 says about 3000 of them responded and were baptized.

Only a few hundred, less than a thousand, put their faith in Jesus during his ministry it appears. Then Peter says, “You whack jobs killed the Messiah,” and 3000 of them come to Jesus in one day. How did that happen? The Advocate, the Counselor, the Convincer, had come. He was now at work convincing people of sin, righteousness and judgment. It wasn’t because Peter was such a powerful orator or was so persuasive. It had little to do with Peter. He just spoke the truth, and because the Spirit was working people responded.

This is great news. I suspect that most of you are like me in that you feel like you are pretty much a fourth rate evangelist, at best. If preaching the gospel to the world were a class, I pretty much think I’d be lucky to squeak by with a D. I’ve known people who were A students in that class. I am impressed by them and wish I were like them, but I’m just not. But this passage is very encouraging for people like me. I can’t convince anybody about sin, righteousness and judgment, and neither can anyone else. I suspect I could preach a sermon that is approximately as good as Peter’s on that day. Well, maybe not as good, but not horrible. But the thing is, it wasn’t Peter’s incredible sermon that brought all those people into the Kingdom of God. It was the work of the Holy Spirit, because it is *always* the work of the Spirit when someone comes into the kingdom. If he doesn’t work powerfully in someone’s heart, then no believing is going to happen.

We don’t have to worry that our faltering words, or our failure to be persuasive or convincing, to have the right arguments and convicting words, is going to keep people out of God’s kingdom. If anyone is going to come into the kingdom it will be because of the powerful work of the Holy Spirit convincing them of sin, righteousness and judgment.

The Holy Spirit is still working today. There was an article in *Christianity Today* magazine by a man named Glenn Pearson that reminds us of this truth. He grew up in a family with big time issues. It was deeply and widely dysfunctional. His dad withheld affection and emotional support and mocked any displays of affection. He completely abandoned the family when Glenn was 12. Glenn had zero models to follow. His paternal grandfather committed suicide. His brother suffered from schizophrenia for 20 years then hanged himself. His maternal grandfather had an emotional breakdown and ended up in a psychiatric hospital for indigents for considerable time. Pearson said, “There wasn’t a healthy man anywhere in sight.” Religion was totally absent from his family. He began to dabble in astrology, seances, white magic and other occult practices. While he was in college at one point he somehow stumbled into a Christian meeting and heard the Gospel for the first time in his life. The moment he heard it he knew that this was true, and it was what he needed. He put his faith in Jesus that night, and soon began growing in his faith. Years later he saw a counselor, hoping to understand more about his own background. After hearing his story the counselor said to him, “There is no explanation for you. In my professional opinion, someone with your background should be unemployable, divorced 3 times, abusive, and an alcoholic or some other kind of addict.” Pearson said the fact that he is none of those things is testimony to God’s grace. He attributes his realization of his need for Christ to one thing, the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit convinced him about sin, righteousness and judgment.

IS A GUIDE INTO TRUTH

In verse 13 Jesus said that the Holy Spirit, whom he referred to in chapter 14 as the Spirit of Truth, would guide the disciples into “all the truth.” People sometimes apply this to us today and say that the Holy Spirit will help us understand the Word of God. He does do that, but that is not really the point of Jesus’ statement here.

Think for a moment about this book that we are studying, the Gospel of John. There are some scholars who think that it was written before Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD, likely some time in the late 60’s. However, most scholars think John wrote sometime around 85 to 90 AD. Since Jesus died at the latest around 33, John wrote at best some 30 plus years after the events, and probably more likely 50 plus years after them. Consider that for a moment. What details do you remember from more than 30 years ago? We’re talking early 90’s. I remember we bought our house. I remember coaching kids hockey teams. I remember fighting the battle of Nintendo with our kids. But I have precious little detail from that time. How about if we go back 50 plus years, so now we’re in the early 70’s. Yikes. I recall I graduated from college in there and went to live in Long Beach. But I have precious few specifics.

If you asked me to write an account of what happened back in those days, whatever I came up with would be pretty sketchy and very thin. It would be mostly made up, and any specifics would be highly unreliable. So why should we consider John’s account trustworthy, especially given that he quite possibly was an extremely old man when he wrote? We know that the Gospel writers probably had some source material. Some of them took notes, and wrote down some accounts of Jesus’ life. But writing materials were terribly expensive back then. So there were few copies of any kind of source material.

This is a crucial promise from Jesus. We can trust the documents because the Holy Spirit guided them into all truth. He made sure that they remembered the things he wanted them to remember. Peter alluded to this in 2 Peter 2:21 when he said about the Scriptures, “prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” Our trust that we have the truth, the actual events of the life of Christ in the Gospels, is based in the work of the Spirit of Truth in the lives of the Gospel writers.

IMPLICATIONS

This passage about the Holy Spirit tells us that it is the work of the Spirit to produce what we know as the Word of God, that is the basis of our faith. It also tells us that it is the work of the Spirit to bring people to an awareness of their need of Jesus to be their Savior and Lord. But what about the work of the Spirit in our lives? What can we expect the Spirit to do in us?

WHAT DOES THE SPIRIT DO IN OUR LIVES?

When I was a kid the most common Bible version was the King James. In that old English version the Holy Spirit was called the Holy Ghost. As a kid I thought, “Ghost! All right, now things at church are getting interesting. The Bible talks about ghosts. Cool.” That was something a kid like me thought was fascinating. This Holy Ghost idea was great because it had the intriguing possibilities of a ghost, but he wasn’t scary. Maybe the Holy Spirit was like Casper, the friendly ghost. A little spooky as a ghost would be, but not frightening. It was disappointing when I found out they weren’t talking about regular ghosts at all.

Too often Christians seem to act as though the Holy Spirit is no factor in their lives. He’s about as real as Casper. But the Holy Spirit is very much a person, very real, and if you’re a believe in Jesus, he has made a huge difference in your life, and he is very much there to keep making a difference.

People often are drawn to the Holy Spirit and the sense that he can make them feel something. They like the sense that maybe he can do something powerful and miraculous in them. They want to *feel* and see the power and presence of God. However, the Bible actually says almost nothing about the Holy Spirit making us feel something, and it calls on us to live not by seeing, but by faith. His power is very real, but we should be clear on what he wants to do with that power in us. What does the Holy Spirit do according to the Bible?

**Enables us to understand and accept God**

The Holy Spirit makes God real to us through Jesus Christ. Paul said a crucial thing in 1 Corinthians 12:3. “No one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus be cursed,’ and no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit.” If you believe and claim that Jesus is Lord, it is because the Holy Spirit is at work. If he weren’t, then you wouldn’t say that.

In 1 Corinthians 2:14 Paul wrote, “The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.”

Many years ago Laurie and I had a financial windfall, and for one of the rare times in our lives up to that point, we had a little discretionary cash. We were in an electronics store that had a flat panel LCD HD TV that was on sale for that day only. We only had an old school 32 inch color TV. The picture on the TV in the store was startling to us in its clarity. It was spectacular. HD was so much better than old school, and this TV was way larger than our dumb set. We debated, then said, “Let’s go for it.” That was unusual for us because we are typically slow to make decisions. We bought that TV, took it home and hooked it up to our cable and turned it on, ready to be blown away by the spectacular picture. I will preface the rest of this story by admitting that we were ridiculously dumb. We knew absolutely nothing about digital TV and HD. We figured this was like any other TV. You hook it up to the cable, plug it in, turn it on and voila! Awesome picture. We were terribly disappointed in what we got. The picture on this expensive new item was exactly like what we had before. It only took up about the same size on the screen as our previous TV and it was exactly zero percent sharper. We took it back to the store the next day and got our money back. We should have just asked what the deal was, because the problem was fixable. What we didn’t know was we had to have a digital HD cable signal and we had to have an HDMI cable to carry the signal from the cable to the TV. We didn’t have what we needed to get that crystal clear picture on our TV. That’s a bit like the Spirit. Without the Spirit’s work, a person doesn’t have what they need to get the picture of the things of God. What they get won’t just be fuzzy, it will be pure foolishness. That person will think, “Why would anyone believe that stuff?”

We believe that Jesus performed miracles, was executed, was buried and was as dead as it is possible to be, but then came back to life. We believe he spent a few weeks appearing to his followers, and then, poof, he was translated back into the spiritual realm. We believe, even though we don’t look any different from anyone else and we don’t have any unusual powers, that the Spirit of Jesus is alive in us. We believe that God loves us and is at work in our lives. We think he is sovereign, even when horrible stuff happens to us, and we keep trusting him. We don’t understand how people can have free will and God can be sovereign over everything, but we still believe it. We believe that God exists in what seems to us a bizarre way as one being but somehow, 3 persons. This idea is inexplicable. We pray and our prayers are not answered, but still we trust. Why do we believe these things and keep trusting when to other people that sounds like utter nonsense? It is not because we are more gullible than other people. It is not because we are just dumber than other people. It’s not because we’re smarter than other people and have figured out things they can’t see. It’s not because we’re better than others. There is only one reason. The Holy Spirit is at work in our lives.

We need to see this powerful truth. We believe in Jesus because the Holy Spirit has worked powerfully to make that happen. Without the miraculous power of the Spirit, we would not believe. We continue to be able to believe and trust in Jesus because of the work of the Holy Spirit, and for no other reason.

Much of the time we don’t realize what a profound miracle this is. It takes monumental power to get us to the place where we get the signal and believe the things of God. Paul wrote in Ephesians 2 that we were all dead spiritually. What can dead people hear and understand and respond to? Nothing! That’s the problem. How much power would it take to make them able to understand and respond? That would be an astounding miracle. If we saw it happen we would be dumbfounded and in awe. That is what it took to bring us to the place where we believe in Jesus.

**Makes us want to do God’s will**

In Ezekiel 36:27 God promised through the prophet, “I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” The Holy Spirit motivates us to do God’s will.

How do we mostly motivate people? We use the carrot and the stick. We offer a reward for doing what we want, and we threaten some sort of punishment if they don’t. If you work hard at your job and do well, you get a raise and maybe a promotion. If you don’t work hard, if you just mail it in if you do anything at all, you get fired. That’s everywhere in the world.

Along comes the Gospel. God says nothing will ever separate us from his love in Christ. We are forgiven, past, present and future. We are his children forever by his grace. Uh, there’s no condemnation, thus no punishment there. You’ve taken away the stick! Many think with zero threat of punishment people are going to run wild. They think that because that’s how it works in the world. One of the things that amazes me is how hard it is sometimes to get little kids to eat. Much of the time our kids struggle to get their kids to eat anything nutritious. How can they motivate them? Maybe it’s not the best in the world, but bribery is a very effective tool. Eat 5 more bites of that good food and you can have 2 cookies after dinner. But if you don’t eat any more there will be no cookies. There it is, the carrot and the stick. But what if there is no stick? What happens if they know they’ll get the cookies no matter what? The system won’t work. Many Christians think if we tell people the pure Gospel it will remove the stick and people won’t be motivated to live as God commands.

There are a couple of big reasons why that is not true. One of them is if we have the Holy Spirit in us, he will motivate us to obey God. He won’t leave us alone while we disobey God. He will put in our heart the desire to obey God. Jeremiah said the natural state of the human heart is to be desperately wicked. Paul wrote in Romans 8 that the mind living by the flesh, which is our natural state, cannot subject itself to God. It is a natural enemy of God. Don’t you find that you want to do God’s will? Yes, that’s why you’re here. Why is that? Because you’re naturally a goody goody, better than other people? Absolutely not. It is because the Holy Spirit is active in you putting in your heart the desire to do God’s will.

**Gives us freedom**

In 2 Corinthians 3:17 Paul wrote, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” We are free from condemnation. Free from the need to keep all of the burdensome aspects of the Law. Free from trying earn approval, to earn righteousness by our own efforts. I had bacon yesterday. Yesterday was the Sabbath, and I worked! Oh no, I violated the Law! I’m doomed. No I’m not. I’m free of the Law. I’m loved by God as his child despite my many flaws. That’s because the Spirit of Christ is in me.,We are free from guilt and from the fear that God will reject us, free from fear of death. Jesus said in him we will know the truth and the truth will make us free indeed.

**Strengthens us**

Paul prayed in Ephesians 3:16 “That out of his glorious riches he (God) may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being.” Many people want to emphasize the power of the Spirit as something that will produce miracles. But that’s not what Paul said.

He said the Spirit’s power works on our inner being. In other words, he strengthens us to enable us to stand and to keep on enduring, persevering in doing the will of God that he has motivated us to do. This doesn’t seem as spectacular, but it is more important.

In fact, one of the most profound works of the Spirit is he gives us the ability to endure, to persevere, to keep on walking faithfully with Jesus when everything feels like it is falling apart. It is helpful to remember that people saw Jesus do lots of miracles, things that were astounding, and they still rejected him. Remember that the people of Israel saw Moses part the Red Sea and provide miraculous food and water in an arid wilderness, and they still doubted and disobeyed God. Miracles are not nearly as effective as people think they’re going to be. They never have been. You can ask Elijah about that some day when you meet him.

HOW DO WE EXPERIENCE THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT?

Jesus spoke quite a bit about the Holy Spirit in John 14 and again here in John 16. There is something conspicuously missing in both of these chapters. Jesus has talked about what the Holy Spirit would do, but he said nothing about what his followers must do to experience the work of the Spirit in their lives. That’s like being given a new piece of technology like a new printer, but with no instructions on how to use it. Why would Jesus give us the Holy Spirit with no instructions on how to experience him?

I believe there is a reason. It boils down to “no instruction needed.” Laurie and I recently bought a football so that the guys could toss the ball around at Christmas. It didn’t come with instructions, because no instructions are needed. If you’re buying a football you know what it is for and how to use it.

But the Holy Spirit is nothing like a football. He does so much, and there are a lot of aspects to his character and work. So don’t we need instructions on how to live by the Spirit? Actually, we don’t. If I wanted you to walk up here to talk with me, do you think I would say, “Stand up. Now lean forward and as you do so pick up one foot and move it out a couple of feet in front of you in my direction. Set it down and transfer your weight onto it. As you do that pick up your other foot and swing it forward in front of your first foot. Repeat this process.” No, I would just say, “Could you walk up here?” I only have to say that because you know how to walk. I have been amazed again at watching our youngest grandchild learn how to walk. No one taught him. It came naturally to him. Jesus didn’t have to give step by step Holy Spirit instructions because we know how to live by the Spirit.

People look for the switch to flip, the steps to follow, the formula for turning on the Holy Spirit in our lives. Jesus gave no formula, no steps, told us of no switch because they don’t exist. We have what we need to live by the Spirit.

We were told that in John 7:37-39. There Jesus said, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them. By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.”

How do we get the Spirit? Jesus said we come and drink of him. John went on to say that meant believing in him. When one believes in Jesus, one gets his Spirit. We describe it as asking Jesus into your heart. Well who do you think comes in? It is the Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit. He takes up residence in your heart when you believe. The evidence of his presence and work is that you do believe and continue to believe in Jesus.

How do we experience the Spirit once we have him? We keep coming and drinking of Jesus. We keep believing in Jesus. We trust in him to provide. We believe that what Jesus supplies is enough. As we continually trust in him his Spirit does his work in us. He gives us life. He gives us freedom and forgiveness. He gives us comfort and strength. He directs us into his truth. There is no formula. There are no steps. There is no other plan. Keep believing in Jesus, keep believing his will is best, that he is with you and will strengthen you as you ask, that what he gives is what you need. As you believe in Jesus the Spirit will produce rivers of living water in you.

The Spirit is ever with you. He enables you to believe. He is there to strengthen you. Yes, he has power, but his power mostly is there to enable us to do God’s will and to keep doing it. Paul said God’s power is most displayed when we are pressed down, but not crushed, when we keep on persevering in faith. Trust in the Holy Spirit to be with you, in you, strengthening you, and working to convince people of sin, righteousness and judgment.