

Xenos Christian Fellowship  
Christian Growth  
Week 2 – The Holy Spirit, Part 2 & The Role of Faith in Sanctification

Overview

- The Holy Spirit's work in the New Covenant
  - Prior to conversion
  - At the moment of conversion
  - After conversion
- Definition of Biblical Faith
- Indicative & Imperative
  - Imperatives are based on indicatives.
  - Experience and active faith.

**The Holy Spirit's Work in the New Covenant**

The Holy Spirit is Christ's gift to the church (Jn. 14-16), and the distinctive mark of the New Covenant (Ezek. 36:27; 2 Cor. 3:8). According to Jesus, the gift of the Spirit makes possible a life of greater spiritual vitality than was available to Old Covenant believers (Jn. 14:12), including the disciples when they were in the physical presence of Christ (Jn. 16:7).

**(John 14:12) "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father.**

**(John 16:7) "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.**

In general, the Father initiates and oversees his plan of redemption, the Son accomplishes it, and the Holy Spirit applies the benefits of Christ's redemptive work to believers (Eph. 1:14; 2 Cor. 5:5). That is, the Holy Spirit provides the present tangible evidence of the believers' future full salvation when they are glorified. The Holy Spirit personally communicates the presence of Christ to believers and through them to the church and the world.

**(2 Cor. 5:5) Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.**

**The New Covenant ministries of the Holy Spirit are usually considered to be the following:**

***Prior to conversion, the Holy Spirit***

**convicts (convinces) non-Christians of their need for Christ.**

Therefore we don't view all negative responses to our witness as bad and we count on God's convicting influence. This motivates us to continue to pray for someone even if you can see no visible signs of progress in his/her life.

**(John 16:8-11) "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; (9) concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; (10) and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me; (11) and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.**

**(1 Thes. 1:5) ... for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.**

*At the moment of conversion, the Holy Spirit permanently...*

1. **Regenerates:** *Imparts spiritual life and a new nature to us.*
- 2.

**(Titus 3:5) He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.**

**(Ezekiel 36:26,27) "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.**

Prior to accepting Christ, we have a natural, inbred disposition against God. After Christ regenerates us, those tendencies are still there, but we have a new heart inclined to respond to God.

3. **Indwells:** *Christ comes to live in us.*

**(Rom. 8:9) However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.**

Consider 1 Cor. 12:13 and the ministry of the Holy Spirit? **Regeneration and indwelling emphasize the idea of "Christ in you."**

**The ministries of the Holy Spirit below emphasize you being "put in Christ."**

4. **Baptizes:** *Puts us into Christ so that we are identified with him*

**(1 Cor. 12:13 ) For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.**

**(Gal. 3:27) For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.**

5. **Seals:** *Secures us permanently in Christ*

**(Eph. 1:13,14\*\*) In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, (14) who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.**

The grammar of this passage indicates that the Holy Spirit is given at the moment of belief in the gospel (contra Pentecostal teaching that baptism of the Holy Spirit as a second work of grace)

Eph. 4:30 and 2 Cor. 5:5, communicate that the Spirit locks us into a permanent relationship with God, guaranteeing our "delivery" to eternal life in the kingdom of God

**(Eph. 4:30) And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.**

Christian Ministry Unit 1 covers the security of our salvation more thoroughly.

6. **Bestows spiritual gifts:** *imparts a supernatural ability to serve God in a particular way*

**(1 Cor. 12:6-11) And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.**

**God gifts every Christian in a unique way in order to serve God and build up the Body of Christ (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; Eph.4:7-12,16; 1 Pet. 4:10,11).**

**(1 Cor. 1:5-7) "...that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, (6) even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, (7) so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ..."**

This implies that we receive our spiritual gifts at conversion.

***Subsequent to conversion, in an ongoing way, the Holy Spirit...***

These categories outline different ways the Holy Spirit works in the life of a Christian. Keep in mind that they are interrelated. For instance, receiving illumination is a way we are assured of our salvation.

Instructors note: Only cover 1 or 2 verses in each section below.

1. ***Assures us of our salvation by enabling us to relate to God personally.***

**(Rom. 8:15,16) For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" (16) The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God...**

**(Gal. 4:6) And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"**

**(John 14:23) Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, make Our abode with him."**

This is often subtle enough that it requires sensitivity to recognize this in your own life. You also need to be able to point it out in the lives of younger Christians.

2. ***Illuminates the Bible's meaning, significance, and application.***

Most of us have had the experience of thinking that a teaching was directed specifically to us. That is the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit.

**(1 Cor. 2:12) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God . . .**

**(Eph. 1:17-19) (I pray) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. (18) I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, (19) and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might...**

3. ***Guides us into God's will for our lives.***

**This leadership consists primarily of personal guidance in the areas of character transformation and ministry purpose.** Contrast this to an impersonal list of rules that dictate a desired behavior or when we mindlessly imitate other Christians.

We will get into this area in more detail later in the course.

4. ***Empowers us for character transformation and fruitful ministry.***

E.g. many have experienced empowering when sharing our faith after an initial feeling of fear.

Note also that gradual character transformation is just as miraculous!

**(Rom 8:4,11) ...in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit... (11) But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you...**

**(Gal. 5:22,23) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (23) gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.**

**(1 Cor. 2:3-5) And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. <sup>4</sup>And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, <sup>5</sup>that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.**

**(2 Cor. 3:5,6) Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, <sup>6</sup> who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.**

**(Col. 1:28,29) And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. <sup>29</sup> And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.**

**(Acts 1:8) . . . but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."**

**(2 Cor. 12:9,10) And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.**

5. ***Comforts us and imparts hope*** to us in the midst of our sufferings by providing purpose and strength to endure.

**(Acts 9:31) So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and, going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.**

**(Acts 13:50-52) But the Jews aroused the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district . . . (52) And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.**

**(Rom. 5:3-5) And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; (4) and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; (5) and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**

**(Rom. 15:13) 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.**

**(2 Cor. 1:3-6) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; (4) who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (5) For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. (6) But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer;**

#### **6. *Enables Christians to be effective in prayer.***

**(Rom 8:26,27) And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.**

He also intercedes for us according to God's will. He leads us in what to pray for.

**NOTE: These ministries of the Holy Spirit are always available to Christians, but they are contingent on our willingness to walk by, or be filled with, the Spirit.** That is what we will be covering later tonight & next week.

So we want to become spiritually mature and see that the Holy Spirit is the agent of change. Now let's consider the role of faith in our growth process.

The Role of Faith in Sanctification

## Introduction

Many churches/Christians affirm that we are justified by grace apart from works, but they then teach or imply that we are sanctified by law through works--that as Christians we have the ability and the obligation to live the Christian life by our own resources. According to this view, if you don't grow, it is because you don't want to grow or because you didn't try hard enough. Others may be very passive and take no role in pursuing sanctification through faith. But Paul insists that sanctification, just like justification, is given to us by God's grace and received simply by faith. Therefore balance is needed as we consider God's role and our role.

Some of the Galatians evidently felt that while they were justified by grace through faith, they now were pursuing sanctification – their transformation – by self-effort. Paul is horrified by this development!

**(Gal. 3:2, 3) This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?**

The way we received Christ = the way we are to walk in him. Since we know that we are justified by grace through faith (Gal. 2:16), we are also sanctified by grace through faith.

(Col. 2:6,7) As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, (7) having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith,

This raises the important question: What does biblical faith look like?

## What is Biblical Faith?

**Definition:** *Biblical faith is a willingness to ACT according to God's truth with DEPENDENCE on him to perform it for/through us.*

As we go through the passages tonight, you'll see there is ample biblical basis for this definition.

Illustration:

A tight-rope walker strung a wire across the Niagara Falls as a crowd gathered on both sides of the falls. First, he walked across using a balancing pole. Next, he walked back across with the pole. Then he wheeled a wheel-barrow across. On the other side, he shoveled 150 pounds of dirt and rock into the wheel-barrow and wheeled it back across the falls. The crowd's applause was louder than the roar of the falls! The man asked the crowd, "Who believes that I can wheel a man across the falls?" Everyone shouted their affirmation. Then he asked, "Who's going to get in the wheel-barrow?" The crowd dispersed immediately. The crowd had a certain kind of faith--mental assent. They intellectually agreed that the man was capable of wheeling a person across the falls. But they did not have another kind of faith--personal trust--because no one was willing to get in the wheel-barrow and entrust their lives to his expertise. Such a step would involve a definite *action*, but it would also involve genuine dependence on the tight-rope walker.

### As it relates to Justification:

On the one hand, we have to depend completely on Christ's death to pay for our sins because there is absolutely no way we can get rid of our own true moral guilt. On the other hand, we must do something to appropriate Christ's payment--receive Christ.

**(Rev. 3:20) “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me.”**

[Optional if you have time] Illustration:

You owe the IRS over a million dollars in back taxes. They have denied your request for an extension and informed you that an agent will be at your house at 11:59pm to impound your house unless you make full payment. You exhaust all of your resources and are able to come up with only \$433.16. At 11:00pm, your doorbell rings. Fearing the worst, you open the door to find a stranger who puts a check in your hand. The check is made payable to you, and is worth well over one million dollars. What must you do to be freed from your debt? You would want to ascertain that funds were on hand to cover this check, and then you would have to endorse the check and deposit it in your account. In other words, you would have to take action--but you wouldn't say afterwards that you had delivered yourself from the IRS! Your action was really only appropriating the gift that was given to you.

### As it relates to Sanctification:

On the one hand, we have to depend completely on God's power to change our lives because there is no way that we can change ourselves. On the other hand, we must actively appropriate God's power for sanctification.

But whereas justification is appropriated once for all by one act of faith, sanctification must be gradually appropriated by ongoing decisions of faith. See Francis Schaeffer's book, *True Spirituality*, Chap. 5 for more on this.

Example: Abraham & Sarah

God justified Abraham the moment that he believed God's promise (Gen. 15:6). But Sarah conceived 25 years later, and God called on them to express their faith in him by having sex all those years.

**Jn. 15:4-12** illustrates this. "Abide in me" is a synonym for sanctifying faith.

- **Where is dependence on God emphasized?**

In vs. 4,5, Jesus emphasizes the "dependence" aspect by stressing that we can do nothing apart from the Vine.

- **Where is cooperative action emphasized?**

In vs. 7-12, he emphasizes the "action" aspect by explaining that abiding involves the choice to remain in his Word, respond to his moral guidance, practice biblical love toward others, etc. These are the practical ways in which we lay hold of his sanctifying power.

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**Therefore, the New Testament teaches that *sanctification is impossible apart from God's power, but it involves human volition and cooperation.*** As you study God's word, He will remind you of this cooperative effort and instruct you in its many facets. But you will need to recognize this dynamic as you study. Let's see in more detail how the New Testament teaches this . . .

## Indicative & Imperative

**The terms "indicative" and "imperative" refer to two different verb moods commonly used by the New Testament authors in their teaching on sanctification.**

**The mood of a verb describes the degree of certainty of the action. There are four main moods used in New Testament Greek. The two moods relevant to our discussion are:**

**Indicative:** *The mood of certainty, actuality* ("He is running."). When we speak of theological indicatives, we are referring to what God has done, is doing, or will do for Christians (Phil 1:6 "He who began a good work in you..."). These indicatives are sometimes declarative statements, and sometimes unconditional promises.

**Imperative:** *The mood of command* ("Go run!"). When we speak of theological imperatives, we are referring to what God calls on us to do ("Abide in me . . . abide in my word . . . love one another . . ."). These imperatives are usually straight-forward commands (e.g. "Love one another..."). Sometimes imperatives are implied as examples (e.g. Paul says "...imitate me as I imitate Christ." in 1 Cor 11:1. Therefore Paul serves as an example and his actions serve as implied imperatives).

## What does all this have to do with biblical faith?

**The indicatives provide the content for the "dependence" aspect of sanctifying faith.** What are we supposed to depend on God for? The New Testament indicatives, as illuminated by the Holy Spirit, provide concrete opportunities to depend upon him rather than on self, others' opinion of you/acceptance of you, feelings, human wisdom, etc.

**The imperatives provide the content for the "action" aspect of sanctifying faith.** How are we to actually step out to follow God? The New Testament imperatives, as applied by the Holy Spirit, provide concrete opportunities to act in faith.

**The New Testament teaches two important relationships: one between *INDICATIVE TRUTHS* and *IMPERATIVE COMMANDS* and another between active faith and Christian experience. Let's explore both.**

Relationship 1: Imperatives are based on indicatives.

### Explanation:

**What God commands us to do (*imperative*) is based upon what he has done, is doing, or will do (*indicative*).**

**Biblical examples: In the following verses, put (parentheses around the indicative portion), underline the imperative portion, and circle the words that identify the relationship between these two portions (in these notes, between < >).**

**(Eph. 4:32) Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, <just as> (God in Christ also has forgiven you).**

**(Rom. 12:1) I urge you <therefore>, brethren, (by the mercies of God,) to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.**

**(1 Jn. 4:11) Beloved, <if> (God so loved us), we also ought to love one another.**

**(Phil. 2:12,13) So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; <for> (it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure).**

Note: "Work out" (*katergazomai*) was used by the Roman historian Strabo to refer to mining operations. It assumes that something is already inside; the idea is to bring it out into view. "Fear and trembling" connotes recognition of powerlessness (see 1 Cor. 2:3) and approaching God with sincerity and respect (Eph. 6:5).

**(Matt. 28:18-20) “(All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth). Go <therefore> and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and (lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age).”**

**(Heb. 10:19-25) “Therefore, brethren, <since> (we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh), and <since> (we have a great priest over the house of God), let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, (having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water). Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, <for> (He who promised is faithful); and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”**

### **Significance of this relationship:**

- *Sanctification is not something we do by ourselves.* God is with us, and he is going to give us all the resources and motivation we need to live for him and do his will. If we understand this, it will build our confidence and motivation to live for God (2 Pet. 1:3,4).
- *Reflecting on the indicatives motivates us to do the imperatives.* The more we focus and reflect on the indicatives, the more hope we have that God can change us, the more motivated we will be to follow him, etc.

- **This also helps us to view God's imperatives properly—not as impersonal orders to be obeyed out of fear and/or duty, but as invitations to experience more of God's love, goodness, faithfulness, redemptive power, etc.**

What do we call a Christian walk that is ignorant of or neglects this relationship? This is a primary form of legalism--just focusing on what God commands us to do without any dependence on him.

### What does it look like to cultivate dependence?

- **Think:**
- *Meditating on indicatives*--especially those that speak to your present difficulties.
- **Thank:**
- Thanking God in prayer *for indicatives and his past faithfulness.*
- 
- **Act**
- : This is obedience to God. It should *follow or be part of* "thinking" and "thanking." *This is the way we express our trust and experience his goodness and faithfulness.* We develop this in the next section.

**Note:** Since we tend to be self-sufficient (the opposite of dependent), *God allows various sufferings into our lives to teach us our need for dependence* (more on this later in this unit). Failure is one type of suffering all committed Christians will endure. Ask God to change your perspective on failure. Often failure opens our eyes to our own inadequacies, teaches us to depend on God, and opens the door to further fruitfulness. Seen this way, failure isn't so intimidating and we're more willing to take risks and follow God in new in challenging ways. This is why some people call failure "the backdoor to success." For more on this, see the excellent paper, *Theology of Failure*, on the Xenos website.

### Relationship 2: Healthy experience flows from active faith

So we've seen the relationship between indicatives and imperatives. What God commands us to do (*imperative*) is based upon what he has done, is doing, or will do (*indicative*). Now we're going to examine a different relationship between experience and active faith.

By active faith, we mean a belief/trust in God's indicatives that leads to acting on his imperatives.

By "experience," we're primarily referring to relational healing, freedom from guilt, character transformation, and other experiences that the Bible emphasizes.

### Explanation:

**In many cases, our *experience* of God's blessing follows our willingness to *act* on the imperatives by faith.** The Bible expresses this relationship in the form of conditional promises (e.g., Matt. 6:33; Rom. 8:28).

There is a common misconception that we should wait to experience God's power before we take action. But the Bible teaches just the opposite. Feelings (like sensing God's power or peace) typically FOLLOW acting on God's imperatives. Christians who don't understand this relationship will be enslaved to their feelings.

### **Biblical Order:**

- **IS NOT:** Learn—Experience—Act.
- **IS:** *Learn—Act—Experience.*

LEARN about God's indicatives and provisions for our growth.

ACT on the imperatives by living consistently with what we've learned.

EXPERIENCE God's blessing.

### **This relationship in action:**

**(Josh. 3:13-16) “And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the LORD--the Lord of all the earth--set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap.” (14) So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. (15) Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, (16) the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho.**

In Josh. 3:13-16, God called on the Israelites to “get their feet wet” before he acted to stop the waters. By doing this, God called on them to act in faith before they experienced his power.

**In the following passages, *underline the imperative involved*, put (parenthesis around the blessing promised), and circle (in these notes between < >) the words that identify the relationship between these two (if applicable). Note to instructors: You may also want to ask students to identify which of last week's three aspects of spiritual maturity (doctrinal, moral, biblical love) each passage emphasizes.**

**(John 13:17\*) "If you know these things, (you are blessed) <if> you do them."**

**(Rom. 12:2) ...do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, <that> (you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect).**

(Jas. 1:21-25) <Therefore> putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, (which is able to save your souls). But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. <For> if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, (this man shall be blessed in what he does).

(Ps. 1:1-3) (How blessed is the man) who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. And (he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers).

## Application

- **Acting on imperatives is an opportunity to experience God's goodness.**

**Qualification:** *Experience does not always follow obedience.* When you act on an imperative, God won't always respond by giving you an experiential moment with him. As he deems best, he will provide these times.

Even when an experience does follow, it is often not immediately after our willingness to act. Sometimes it happens later, or gradually.

e.g. Our consistent study of the Bible yields a gradual experience of deeper excitement for the Bible, as well as the gradual experience of character transformation.

- **We need to regularly choose against our feelings.**

This corrects the thinking, "Since I don't feel like going to central teaching tonight (or this class, home group, a ministry opportunity, etc.), it will be legalistic for me to do so -- or there is something wrong with my relationship with God or else I would feel like it.

It is possible for us to feel aversive to God's will, and yet to choose by faith to obey for the right reasons. The alternative is to become a slave to your fallen feelings!

**Qualification:** *Chronic negative feelings associated with serving God may indicate a deeper problem.*

This is not to say that our subjective state has no bearing at all on our spiritual state of health. When certain feelings persist over a long period of time, we should reflect on whether our walk needs adjustment.

Example: If we are chronically plagued by anxiety, we may need to revisit the Bible's promises that God will provide for our needs (Phil. 4:6,7). Chronic aversion to prayer or close fellowship may indicate a hardened heart, or failure to understand grace. In sorting out these matters, the input of other mature Christians is often very helpful.

- **Be willing to step out of your *comfort-zone* by taking *scary steps of faith*.**

Stepping out of our comfort zone involves serving others and obeying commands that go against our habits and feelings (e.g., apologizing for our part in a fight instead of withdrawing, rationalizing, punishing, etc.).

One way we can assess our spiritual health, therefore, is to ask ourselves, "Over the last few months, what scary steps has God called on me to take? What was my response?" The specific steps will vary as we grow, but this will be a consistent feature of following God. "Yesterday's faith won't fight today's battles." (Francis Schaeffer, *True Spirituality*)

**Qualification:** This is a relational process between you and God.

Often, our personal relationship with God dries up because we aren't stepping out in faith, following him out of our comfort zones (above). This is not an impersonal, legalistic "Just follow the rules!" issue. God knows what steps we are able to take, and he personally convicts and guides us to these decisions.

## Conclusion

It should be obvious that these two areas (indicatives and imperatives) must be kept in correct balance (both individually and corporately) for spiritual growth to occur. Yet Christians tend to be in a perpetual flux in their understanding of and emphasis on both areas. This is natural unless it goes to an unhealthy extreme. We should be able to identify imbalance and correct it by emphasizing the complementary truth. Helping other Christians do this is an important part of effective ministry.

## Memory Verses

**Eph. 1:13,14\*\* Christians are normally indwelt by the Holy Spirit the moment they put their faith in Christ**

**Jn. 13:17\* Experience flows from active faith**

## Assignment

Complete the *Walking by the Spirit Assignment*.

**Week 2 Exam Review Guide**

1. Know the ministries of the Holy Spirit in the non-Christian's life, at conversion, and in the Christian's life.
2. Be able to define biblical faith: A willingness to act according to God's truth with dependence on him to perform it through you.
3. Be able to define "indicative" and "imperative," and explain the relationship between them in the New Testament (What God commands us to do [*imperative*] is based upon what he has done is doing or will do [*indicative*]).
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.