

## MOODY DISTANCE LEARNING

### Walking by the Spirit, Part 1

*Greg Wheatley:* Welcome to Radio School of the Bible. This program is a ministry of the Center for External Studies at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

My name is Greg Wheatley, I'm your host for these broadcasts, and it is a privilege to have you studying along with us this quarter in Radio School of the Bible. The topic – God's will for your life.

And our instructor is Dr. Bill Thrasher, professor of Bible and Theology in the Graduate School of Moody Bible Institute. Well, last time in Radio School of the Bible, we talked about God's will as it relates to surrendering our lives as an acceptable response to God's mercies.

And that comes out of, of course, Romans 12. So, maybe with your notebook out there, ready to take notes, let's get right back into where we are today with Dr. Bill Thrasher.

*Dr. Bill Thrasher:* Thank you, Greg. We've said a person who wants to know God's will, must respond to the revelation of God's character. And that response is outlined here for us in Romans 12. It's the presentation of our lives, our bodies, to the Lord as a living and holy sacrifice.

We looked at the basis of that being who God is and what He's done. And one thing, what God's done, is He's liberated us to make it possible to present our life to the Lord.

We looked at the meaning of that, and I read a quote that I'd written and said that that was on the notes, if they were to write and give us a self-addressed, stamped envelope, they could get that. We could put that into their hands.

And we had also looked at the tremendous blessing of that in regard to being able to put ourselves into the hands of God, knowing that He, in a sense, would look after us.

I remember speaking of that – Dr. Carl Armerding, 85 years of age, talking about when he did that when he was 17 years of age, and the great – all the decisions that that it helped him make all through the years of his life.

Well, today we'd like to look at this idea of walking by the Spirit. That is one way we respond to the revelation of God's character, walking by the Spirit. It is a command of God there in Galatians 5:16, "But I say to you, walk by the Spirit."

And then also the command of God, "Don't get drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit." Just as much a command of God to be filled with the Spirit as it is not to get drunk. To be filled with the Spirit.

Now, first of all, we want to look at the meaning of that. The meaning of that – what does it mean to walk by the Spirit? What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?

You know, perhaps the best advice I could give was the advice we talked about last time, that that individual gave to Dr. Carl Armerding in regard to Romans 12:1-2. He said, "You know, I want you to go in the room, put your finger on that verse, get on your knees, and tell God you want to do it."

And that's – my words may frustrate somebody, quite frankly. And it may mean because God, ultimately, He wants to be your teacher. Now, He may use me; I sure hope He does. But ultimately, God is the one who wants to teach us to walk by the Spirit.

You certainly can count upon this: That God will never command you to do something that He will not explain to you and that He will not enable you to do. God has commanded you to walk by the Spirit.

You know, I have found it sometimes helpful just to carry verses of Scripture around with me as I go into a day. And I remember one day just carrying this verse around with me, "To walk by the Spirit."

And you know, as you go through various aspects of life, what does it mean to walk by the Spirit as you're doing this, or doing this, or doing that?

And that's helpful. I need to do that more. I remember one day, it just helped me understand, "Okay, well, who is the Spirit?" The Spirit is a person. He's a person. So, he's a person who's always with me.

He's also God. And so, the resources of God are with me. And also, Jesus called Him a helper, a Greek word *paraclete*, the idea of one who's called alongside to help. And so, to my shame, there are times that I don't lean upon His help.

He's a person. He's God. He's a helper. So, to know who He is, yeah. Also, if you were to ask me, "What does it mean to walk by the Spirit," these are the words I would use. They're not the only words that can be used, but these are the words I would use.

First of all, it involves an abandonment of oneself to the Lord. What we talked about in presenting one's life to the Lord – an abandonment of oneself to the Lord. It involves also a continual abiding in the Lord.

Now, let me try to make that second one more concrete. We talked last time in regard to the idea of presenting our life to the Lord and sort of what that meant. Now, this idea of a continual abiding – once again, there are three words here that communicate to me.

One is the word "open." You know, if I were to say these words to myself, and you say these words to you, "Am I open to the Lord? Is there anything that's closed to Him, closed to His control? Am I open?" You know, probably the familiar book, I guess it's still in print, *My Heart, Christ's Home* –

*Greg Wheatley:* Mm-hmm.

*Dr. Bill Thrasher:* If you've ever read that, you know, the idea that sometimes how we can reserve certain rooms for ourselves, and the Lord, "No, I want that room, that room." It's are we open to the Lord?

And then secondly, and I think this is where the great freedom comes when you're walking by the Spirit, is, are we dependent upon the Lord? Is there anything I'm trying to do that I have not – what? Explicitly committed to God and am trusting Him to do?

God will show me what my part is. I like the words of one author. He says, "You know, you need to activate your faith before you activate your will."

*Greg Wheatley:* Hm.

*Dr. Bill Thrasher:* Are we believing God to do what He's promised, dependent upon Him? You know, I continually have to rediscover this truth in my life, the truth of the matter is, in my own soul. And this is the freedom of depending upon his Spirit. Because there's times that I will shift my focus away from the Lord to my responsibility.

And I'll find myself – I can even feel it many times in my own body, regarding the tensions that will come up of me trying to do that, of what the Lord wants me to be trusting Him.

*Greg Wheatley:* Hm. Can we get – can we just get real practical with this one for just a second?

*Dr. Bill Thrasher:* Yes.

*Greg Wheatley:* For the Christian who is trying to begin their day with committing their life to the Lord, they're wanting to put this into practice, the walking by the Spirit, the yielding of one's life to the Lord. Help us understand the balance between letting God do His work and fulfilling our responsibility.

*Dr. Bill Thrasher:* Okay.

*Greg Wheatley:* So, in other words, if I have – maybe you have an example in mind, but I know that during the day I have to meet with someone regarding a very delicate topic, one extreme would be simply to say, "Lord, I'm not gonna prepare for this; You're just gonna have to give me the words."

The other extreme would be to say, "I don't need the Lord's help; I'm gonna sweat this out."

*Dr. Bill Thrasher:* Yes.

*Greg Wheatley:* Obviously, neither, I don't think you would say, is correct.

*Dr. Bill Thrasher:* Right.

*Greg Wheatley:* Help us understand our responsibility in light of God's empowering us to do what He wants us to do.

*Dr. Bill Thrasher:* Certainly in regard to the balancing truth of God's part is man's responsibility, and Scripture has no problem putting the two together. I like a verse like Colossians 1:29, where it says, "I labor to the point of physical exhaustion. I labor according to His power, which mightily works within us."

We alluded to that one particular broadcast. So, now something may help in regard to a person knowing themselves. Let's say I was speaking to two different people, and they were two entirely different personalities.

Let's say there was one personality was a person that was extremely conscientious. Another personality was just sort of extremely easy going. It might be the thing that you'd say to either one, or a person would say to themselves, might be different.

Now, let's say the person that's extremely conscientious, you know, what they may need to hear is something that – a phrase that's generally criticized, because it's out of balance – but the idea of, "Let go and let God."

*Greg Wheatley:* Yeah.

- Dr. Bill Thrasher:* Well, that may be what that person needs to hear, because they have so drained into their mind their part, they're not gonna be –
- Greg Wheatley:* I've got to do this, or it won't get done.
- Dr. Bill Thrasher:* Exactly. They almost need to totally focus on God's part to get the balance.
- Greg Wheatley:* Hm.
- Dr. Bill Thrasher:* Now, the other person, they may need to – well, the Scripture says, "To admonish the unruly."
- Greg Wheatley:* Mm-hmm.
- Dr. Bill Thrasher:* And yet, not everyone needs admonishment, as you look at that verse in I Thessalonians 5. There's different medicine for different people. So, it does help to know oneself.
- Greg Wheatley:* That's helpful.
- Dr. Bill Thrasher:* And to know what side of the balance maybe needs to be emphasized.
- Greg Wheatley:* Mm-hmm.
- Dr. Bill Thrasher:* God will never make us irresponsible.
- Greg Wheatley:* Yeah.
- Dr. Bill Thrasher:* And I think sometimes that we can fear walking in the Spirit for – quite frankly, certainly I cannot trust God for something that I have not truly surrendered to Him.
- Greg Wheatley:* Mm-hmm.
- Dr. Bill Thrasher:* So, trusting Him, depending upon Him presupposes that I've fully surrendered something to Him.
- Greg Wheatley:* Mm-hmm. Hm.
- Dr. Bill Thrasher:* And many times, that's the fear, you know. It involves what? Okay, submitting those things to the Lord, submitting that delicate situation to the Lord, surrendering that need to the Lord, saying, "God, you know, I trust you to prepare me."

Now, sometimes if you get before the Lord in regard to a situation like that, you're not being irresponsible, but you seek the Lord and it's just like – well, you can't come up with a one, two, three way of approaching it.

*Greg Wheatley:* Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

*Dr. Bill Thrasher:* And it may be that, you know, God wants you to be open into that moment, and so, God obviously is one who prepares us. But also, He can meet us in the moment as well.

*Greg Wheatley:* Yeah, that's helpful, helpful.

*Dr. Bill Thrasher:* That's an excellent question. I think that's a question that we all ask when we come to this, "What's my part, and what's God's part?"

*Greg Wheatley:* Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

*Dr. Bill Thrasher:* I think that one thing that we – God wants to bring us to the necessity of walking by the Spirit. In other words, the life God's calling me to live is beyond me. I can take the Christian life down to my level, but it's not the Christian life.

I mean, God's telling me to love as Jesus has loved, and it's just beyond me to love that way. It's beyond – and also, the enemies that we face, they're too big for us.

*Greg Wheatley:* Yeah.

*Dr. Bill Thrasher:* So, the necessity, "Okay, Lord, if I'm to live this life, there has to be resources." I think that's what – this truth, what God used in my own life, as I wandered as a college student, an individual in a very rudimentary way shared with me this idea of being filled with the Spirit.

And I walked away from that not understanding it very much, but seeing, "There must be some hope. There's a resource beyond myself." Because I was somewhat externally successful in my life at that particular time, but inwardly so bankrupt that –

You know, "There is a life, there is a resource beyond myself," is what I needed to hear. Certainly, a part of walking by the Spirit also is being responsive to sin. So, if I'm to walk by the Spirit, I must deal with sin in my life. As God points it out, I must agree with Him and confess it.

The individual, Dr. Stephen Olford, he used to tell me this, he says, "You know, you need to be as sensitive to sin in your life as the pupil of your eye is to foreign matter." That's an aspect. So, I like those words about being open to Him, being dependent upon Him, and being responsive to Him.

*Greg Wheatley:* Well, thanks, Dr. Thrasher. It's always good to have the benefit of sitting right with your instructor, and we hope that's how you feel about these sessions as well.

Well, thanks for joining us today. We'll look forward to seeing you here next time in Radio School of the Bible.

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