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A1029 – July 18, 2010 – Galatians 5:16 – Christ Our Model

Jesus, our model. “It is clear that the Son sought, in all He said and did, to do only and always the will of the Father (e.g. John 8:28-29). Yet how was the Son enabled to do the work the Father sent Him to do? Did He do it out of His deity? In that case He doesn’t need the help of the Father, He has all the divine attributes Himself and can do it Himself. Yet Peter, when he summarized the whole life and ministry of the Lord Jesus, spoke about how “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him” (Acts 10:38). This text makes clear what we can observe in many Messianic prophecies (Isa 11:1-2; Isa 61:1; Lk 4:18) and in the Gospel accounts themselves (Matt 12:28), namely, that Jesus lived his life, resisted temptation, performed his miracles, and in all ways accomplished what the Father sent him to do, through the agency of the Spirit. The Spirit, then, stands behind the obedience of Christ and thus is a model for living the Christian life, this side of Pentecost... This seems not to bother the Spirit at all. Rather, He continues to do His work, behind the scenes, as it were, and assists the Father’s calling on the Son’s life by enabling Him to carry out the mission given Him in His true humanity...Without fanfare or accolades, the Spirit simply enables Jesus’ humanity.” Therefore Christ is our model for how to live the Christian life.

Today we want to pick out some more things from the Christ, our model. Turn to Heb 5:8. We can’t get too much of Christ. One of the things that Christians object to is the idea that Christ had to learn obedience. What’s the objection? Well, Jesus is God. And since God knows all things then Jesus knows all things and can’t learn anything. What’s the problem with that view? Yes, Jesus is God. That much is true. But Jesus is also man. What happens if He’s not man? Then when He dies on the cross He’s not dying for

man. And then we've lost salvation. So Jesus must also be man, He must also be a true human being with a true human body, a true human spirit, a true human soul. And if Jesus is a true human being then don't human beings have to learn? Yes. So, in his humanity is it so incredible that He had to learn? The answer to this kind of problem is the orthodox formula of the hypostatic union; that Jesus is undiminished deity united with true humanity without confusion in one person forever. He has a divine nature and a human nature. Now obviously in His undiminished deity He never learned anything. What can God learn? He already knows everything. But in His true humanity He did have to learn. And that's what Hebrews 5:8 and 9 is referring to. Jesus, in His human nature, learned. Look at verse 8, "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered." Although He was a Son," why's that thrown in there? To remind us just who we're dealing with. Jesus is the Son of God. And 1st century believers tended to write off the same thing we write off, the fact that even though Jesus is the Son of God He had to learn. So he prefaces it, "Although He was a Son," we're not denying His deity or His humanity, "Although He was a Son," deity, "He learned obedience" humanity. And that's the same kind of learning you and I have to do, there's no problem with the translation or something, learn means learn. Jesus had to learn. Now if you think that bothers people look at verse 9, "And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation," Now you say, what, Jesus had to be made perfect. Well, if He had to be made perfect then the implication is that Jesus was imperfect. Not necessarily. That doesn't logically follow. Lack of perfection does not imply imperfection. Take for example someone who has never missed a math problem in their entire life. Does that make them a perfect mathematician? Not if they've never attempted to answer a math problem. See, as long as you haven't been tested on a math problem you never miss one but you also haven't been tested. And you're not perfect until your skills have been put to the test and you don't miss. So in the same sense, the Lord Jesus Christ was born without sin but when He was born He hadn't been tested. So what's the life of Christ all about? It's the testing that the Lord Jesus had to go through to be made perfect. To demonstrate, not only am I without sin but I generated perfect righteousness that can be imputed to the believer's account. I walked through this sinful world, all the mess and I come out on the other side perfectly clean, you haven't got a single speck of dirt on Me. I've got perfect obedience.

Now do you and I have to learn obedience? If the Lord Jesus Christ had to learn obedience and be made perfect then obviously we do. It's the aim of sanctification. We are to learn to obey My heavenly Father as Jesus did. We are to be Christ-like. If that's the case, how did Christ do it? That's the million dollar question. To answer we want to turn to the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah is full of gems about the Messiah. Someday I'd love to sit down and take the time to work through Isaiah verse by verse. Isa 50. This is a prophecy of the Messiah. How would the Messiah learn obedience? What would be the daily procedure as He grew up in the home of Mary and Joseph in the little town of Nazareth? In His humanity how would he learn obedience to the Father? You have to imagine, Jesus' family was probably constantly having theological discussion. We don't know a lot about his earlier years but we do know that Jesus' brothers and sisters did not believe He was the Messiah. Probably they were resentful, older brother, never makes a mistake, never sins, the guy's a nerd, the guy's a kook, we don't know what they thought.

All we know is they weren't believing this claim that He was the Messiah until after the resurrection. But look at this insight Isaiah gives us into what the Messiah's daily life would be like. "The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples," what's a disciple? It's the word for a learner. What does that mean? The Lord has given Me the tongue of a learner. What does a learner do? If he's a good learner he learns the doctrine and he learns to articulate the doctrine. It does little good to just sit around and hear something being taught. If you can't articulate it to someone else what good is it? If they need to know something but you can't tell them what's the point. That's one of the places we break down in our learning in the Christian life. We don't talk about doctrine, so we don't know how to regurgitate it when someone else needs it. We walk out - that was a great sermon, yeah it was, - that's the end of it, never articulate it back. The Lord Jesus not only learned the doctrine but he learned to articulate it. Some statistical studies have been done on Jesus' family. Scholars have compared the writings of Jesus' half-brothers Jude and Titus and the words of his mother Mary in the Gospels with Jesus' words and there's a common vocabulary to this family. You can tell that the family all use the same illustrations, they all use nature. They must have spent hours out in nature looking at the agriculture, looking at the stars because they use analogies from nature to communicate truth. There are linguistic parallels that show Jesus' family engaged in theological conversation. Being a good disciple requires that kind of extensive discussion

and articulation of the doctrine. Here's what it does. Look again at the verse, "The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word." Look at that, what did we say is the characteristic of a disciple? The ability to articulate the truth. The Messiah could do it with a word. That's how well He knew the word of God. If someone came under a difficult time in life and needed to be uplifted the Lord Jesus could give one word of truth that would bring rest to someone's soul. How did he learn to do this? "He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple." Who awakened the Lord Jesus Christ morning by morning? The Father. Every morning, seven days a week the Father woke the Lord Jesus Christ up and said, alright, time for Bible study, and He trained Him. The Father daily taught His Son. There might be some application there for us earthly fathers in teaching our children. Verse 5, "The Lord God has opened My ear; And I was not disobedient Nor did I turn back." What's that all about? He heard the word, the hearing of the ear, and He obeyed the word. When the Lord Jesus Christ came under trial he trusted and obeyed His Father. Verse 6, here's the most intense trial ever in history. Now the Messiah would have to put all that training to work. "I gave My back to those who strike Me, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting." That's all about the torments that led to the cross, He put up with it. Verse 7, "For the Lord GOD helps Me, Therefore, I am not disgraced; Therefore, I have set My face like flint," now what He means by that, flint is known for its hardness, it's harder than steel, and the point being that the Messiah was determined, absolutely determined to do the will of the Father and complete His mission even in the face of His tormentors. Why? Because of His prior training. End of verse 7, "And I know that I will not be ashamed. ⁸He who vindicates Me is near; Who will contend with Me? Let us stand up to each other; Who has a case against Me? Let him draw near to Me. ⁹Behold, the Lord GOD helps Me; Who is he who condemns Me? Behold, they will all wear out like a garment; The moth will eat them." The point being that the trial was a farce, Jesus was innocent and though He had to endure these sufferings which led to His death throughout He knows that God was with Him to help Him and in the end He knew He would be victorious.

Then we have the application which is related to our verse in Galatians. Verse 10, "Who is among you that fears the LORD, That obeys the voice of His servant, That walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name

of the LORD and rely on his God.” Look at the words: fear the Lord. That’s deep respect for His majesty, one who obeys, who walks in darkness and has no light, the implication there is you’re going through a trial and you can’t see your way out of it, how is this going to get solved? Answer, trust in the Lord, rely on Him and He’ll give you rest, He’ll help you, just as He did the Lord Jesus Christ. This is how we live the Christian life. But it all started with the Father daily waking that young boy up and personally training Him in the word of God.

To see this in the NT turn to Luke 2:52. Luke gives us the most data about the early life of the Lord Jesus Christ and that’s because Luke was a doctor. Luke was interested in human development and so he got some insights from Mary about Jesus’ birth, Jesus’ development and we can tell from the text he interviewed her personally to get this information. And here’s validation in Luke 2:52 that Jesus did learn or grow in four spheres. “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.” The verb there, increased, is an imperfect verb, it means ongoing action in the past, He was increasing and increasing and increasing, daily he was increasing in wisdom. That’s skill in living, not Greek wisdom, Hebrew wisdom, it’s skill in thinking and living. “and in stature” that’s his physical stature more than likely. “and in favor with God” spiritual favor “and man” social favor. So we have this statement to the effect Jesus in His humanity increased mentally, spiritually and socially.

But let’s look now at what precedes the statement. What was the evidence that led Luke to include this note about Jesus increasing in his Gospel? Obviously Luke was fascinated by it. It’s a little story about Jesus’ boyhood life; we all are familiar with it to some degree. Verse 41, “Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.” This was the custom of Jesus’ family. Verse 42, “And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast;”. Jesus was a year younger than bar Mitzvah age; he was just 12 years old. Now after the “full number of days, the boy Jesus,” the emphasis is he’s just a boy, this is a boy here and there’s something He did when He was a boy that caused people to marvel, “the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it,” This is where Joseph and Mary get a bad rap, but it’s just that they’re travelling in a caravan and these were all families that knew one another and it was nothing uncommon for the kids to run around with the other kids

and they just supposed he was in the caravan running with these other kids. Finally they realize he's missing and they turn back to Jerusalem. After three days, three days without their 12 year old son, they find him in verse 48, "When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You." ⁴⁹And He said to them, "Why is it that you were looking for Me?" Now careful here, don't read to fast, watch the words. His parents didn't understand the words, we want to understand the words. "Did you not know that I had to be in My father's house?" Look at that language, I HAD to be in My father's house, not I was in My father's house. I HAD to be there. What's the implication if He hadn't been in His Father's house? He would have been disobedient to the Father. So this little trip down to the Temple was His Father's will for His life. He had personally been instructed to be there. Now, what was he doing there? Verse 46, "Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions." Now the teachers here were the doctors of the Law. They had memorized word for word the Hebrew text of Torah and many of them had learned word for word the entire Hebrew text of the OT. They knew the word of God so well that even if you began to read a sentence from the OT Hebrew text they could finish the sentence. They were amazingly conversant with the OT Scriptures. Yet here we have a twelve year old listening to them and asking them questions. And apparently the questions alone revealed His fantastic knowledge of the Scriptures and so, verse 47, "And all who heard Him were amazed," it's the imperfect, it means they were constantly beside themselves; theological question after theological question they were amazed and amazed and amazed over and over and over for three days. They didn't go home, they didn't go sleep, this was a marvel the doctors of the Law didn't want to miss and so they didn't know what to make of this twelve year old boy. "amazed at His understanding and His answers." Since He provided answers, the implication is that Jesus asked them questions, as a student should, and then after they answered, or tried to answer. Then they asked Jesus what He thought and He answered. The only thing I can liken this to is a twelve year old sitting in on a departmental faculty meeting at Harvard and the twelve year old is providing insight to the faculty! They were shocked that such a young boy knew so much about the word of God. But what did Isaiah say, "morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple." It goes on, his parents find Him, they ask Him why He treated them this way and in verse 49 you have the first words of the

Lord Jesus ever recorded in Scripture. And what are they? Statements to the effect that My obedience to My Father supersedes parental obedience. Which tells you what? That by the age of twelve He was conscious of His Messiahship. He was conscious of the virgin birth, He was conscious of who His true Father was and He knew His mission.

Why are we going through all this? I want you to see how saturated the Lord Jesus Christ was with the Scriptures. This is why, when He does enter His ministry, when He was about 30 years of age, the guy is soaked in Scripture. This is why the Pharisees and Sadducees eventually give up asking this guy theological questions. The guy is dripping wet with Scripture and if you just squeeze Him a little bit all this Scripture comes pouring out. Granted He didn't have the flesh to hinder Him, Jesus Christ didn't have any sin, but He did have impediments to this. He had the world and He had the devil to deal with. But what we're arguing is that in spite of these hindrances the Lord Jesus Christ learned in His humanity, He mastered the Scriptures. He was fully conversant with the Scriptures and so when the heat was on and the pressure cooker was about to explode, He was able to submit fully to the will of the Father.

To see this turn to John 8:28. Jesus was so in tune with the Father's will for His life. "So Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am *He*, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me." Look at that? What did we read in Isaiah, "morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple." Training. Scriptural training, early in life, there's no substitute. Jesus was drenched in the Scriptures to the point He could say, verse 28, "I do nothing on My own initiative." Now which of us could say we do nothing on our own initiative? Here's Jesus in His unfallen humanity and even in His unfallen humanity He says I do nothing on My own initiative. What does this show us? Anyone pick up on this morsel? Even if you and I were not fallen we would still need to depend upon God to produce fruit that is pleasing to Him. Verse 29, "And He who sent Me is with Me;" who sent the Son? The Father sent the Son. "He has not left Me alone," The Father was with Him all the time, to aid him, to help him. Why? "for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him." Now think of that statement. How arrogant if He wasn't who He claimed to be. Which if us could claim, "I always do the things that are pleasing to Him?" This is a fantastic claim. Jesus Christ constantly, always did the things that

are pleasing to the Father and He did it by constant dependence on the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ chose to depend upon the Holy Spirit even though His humanity was unfallen.

So let's talk about choice, let's talk about the will. Turn to John 6:38. When we come into this world we're fallen in Adam. So we are born with the flesh and our will is enslaved to our flesh. We can only do in accordance with the flesh and that means all we can do is sin. When we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ we receive the Spirit, He indwells us and now our will can go either way, we can operate according to the Spirit or according to the flesh. It's a *bona fide* human choice to live by the Spirit or by the flesh. Some Christians abuse this by saying, well I'm saved and I have a will, so I can do whatever I want. Question: is that the mentality of the Lord Jesus Christ? Here's the mentality of the Lord Jesus Christ, John 6:38, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me." Now the Son is God incarnate, He's the Lord of the universe. So think of the humility of the Son in taking this role. He so humbled himself before the Father that He took to Himself true humanity so He could be the author of our redemption but to get there HE HAD TO ALWAYS AND EVERYWHERE OBEY THE FATHER'S WILL. Look at that statement again, "I came not to do my own will but the will of Him who sent me." Now is that true of us? What I'm getting at is, is that our mental attitude as Christians? Can each one of us say I am here not to do my own will but to do the will of the Father? If it's not we've got a problem because that's why we're here. If the Lord Jesus Christ could humble Himself in this way to the Father, being very God of God and very Light of Light, how much more should we humble ourselves and be exclusively living to do the will of the Father. Is that too much to ask now that we've looked back and seen the Son of God do it, that we should now do it?

But you say, yes, we should, but the Lord Jesus didn't have the flesh. Granted He did not but that only emphasizes my point ever more strongly. Let's think it through by way of a question. This is a very carefully articulated question. Every word is key in this question: "If a human, devoid of the flesh, is incapable of pleasing God in his own strength (e.g. Jesus and Adam before his fall), then how much less capable of pleasing God is a human with the flesh (the rest of humanity)?" I see no other way for a human being to operate such as to please God than to operate in dependence upon the Holy

Spirit, even for an unfallen individual. Therefore, how much more must those of us who are fallen depend upon Him. It seems to be the teaching of Scripture that only a provision made by the infinite God can make humanity pleasing to Him. In light of the Creator-creature distinction such a truth is only reinforced. The creature is forever dependent upon the Creator. Fortunately such provision for dependence is made by the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. So we don't really have any excuses.

He's gone before us to demonstrate that a life by the Spirit not only is possible, it's actual. It's actually been accomplished in history. So we want to do what Jesus did, we want to live a Christ-like life. To do that we want to be like Jesus in that we want to be saturated with the Scriptures so that when the pressure is on in life and we're being pressed by the temptations, we're being squashed by trials, our life is in shambles, we're being squeezed, what comes out? What is our response? Are we like the Lord Jesus, saturated with the word of God to the point that we respond immediately with the word of God, we function under His authority, we submit to Him and obey His will for our life or do we fall to pieces and resort to a gimmick?

You know why I'm doing all this stuff about Jesus? Gal 5:16 is about the Spirit, why do you keep talking about Jesus? Because I want to keep your eyes focused on where the Spirit wants our eyes focused. The Spirit comes to glorify the Son, not Himself (John 16:12-14; 1 Cor 12:3; 1 John 4:1-3). The Spirit is perfectly comfortable taking the backseat. So the method I'm using is reflective of the Scriptures. What does Hebrews say? It's right on the cover of your bulletin. Keeping our eyes fixed where? On the Spirit? On the Father? No. On Jesus. Jesus is center stage. So Paul says, **walk by the Spirit** because the Spirit has come to empower the work of Christ in and through his people. But for Paul the central theme is Christ. So the Spirit is always going to direct us to Jesus, *if* He's the one doing the directing. We can be directed by the flesh, that's the other side of the coin.

So now, let's deal directly with the text of Gal 5:16. We now have a model for how Christ did it. He's the model for how we are to do it. And now we have a clearer picture of these verses. **¹⁶But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. ¹⁷For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in**

opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

Now this is describing a war. Verse 17, **for these are in opposition**, it's a word used of "conflict, it's a word used of battle, when two opposing forces take up arms against one another, each set out to destroy the other. And you know the battle. If you're a Christian you've felt the tension of this battle every day of your Christian life. On one side we have the **Spirit** on the other side we have the **flesh**. But these are not equally opposite and powerful. A point to ponder. The Spirit of God is the living God and has all the attributes of God. He is sovereign, righteous, just, loving, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, immutable and eternal. The **flesh** has none of those attributes and therefore we have one in us who is greater than the world, the flesh and the devil. Conquering, therefore, is possible, not because of who we are in and of ourselves, but because of the One who lives in us.

The way to conquer is to **walk by the Spirit**. Now this is something that the believer is to do. In fact, it's a command; **walk** is a command in verse 16. Notice in our passage three related words or expressions. In verse 16 the expression is **walk by the Spirit**, in verse 18 the expression is **being led by the Spirit**, that's passive and in verse 25, **let us also walk by the Spirit**, but walk there is a different word than **walk** in verse 16. These are three different words. The word in verse 16 is *peripateo*. It's a compound word from *pateo*, to walk and *peri*, "around" so *peripateo* means "to walk around," it's a metaphor for living your life. You live your life step by step, day by day and so the command here is to take each step, day by day by means of the Spirit, not "with" the Spirit, not "in the Spirit," "by means of the Spirit." It's a dative of instrument; walk by means of the Spirit. Now if you do that Paul says, **you will not carry out the desire of the flesh**. Why? Because the Spirit will carry out His desire in your life. His desire is verses 22-23, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. The flesh has desire too. The desire of the flesh is in vv 19-21; immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. So both the Spirit and the flesh have desire and their desire is listed in these verses. We don't have to guess which way we're walking. We just have to look at the list and it tells you how you're walking, which should be evident, but apparently is not so Paul has to tell us.

Now let's come back verse 16. If you do walk by means of the Spirit, which is a walk of dependence, yieldedness to the Father's will in our life, just like the Lord Jesus, then we **will not carry out the desire of the flesh**. The word there for **desire** means cravings for something forbidden, a longing for something that goes on in our flesh. There are certain things our flesh craves and we all know in our own personal flesh what these things are and we want them and we set our mind on them and we can't get them off our mind until we go out and perform them. Then we start all over again. That word in our verse, **carry out** means to perform those cravings, to do them. The flesh has certain demands that need to be met, it has daily requirements in order to thrive and the more you perform the demands of the flesh the stronger the cravings become and the more difficult it is to shut it down and stop the craving. We all know this because we have all been caught in habitual sin patterns and these are things we typically deal with the rest of our lives. The only way Paul says to shut these down is to walk by means of the Spirit. Walk in dependence upon Him. In fact the verse is a double negative, in the English you get marked off for using a double negative. In the Greek it's used for emphasis. And it uses two words for "no" *ou me*, to emphasize that if you walk by means of the Spirit then there's no way possible you are going to perform the desire of the flesh. There is no possible scenario you can dream up in which you are walking by means of the Spirit that you could carry out the desire of the flesh. It's just not possible. And so that does mean there is such a thing as Christian perfection.

The doctrine of perfectionism has been a very misunderstood and controversial doctrine. It's stated thusly. No Christian can say he is without sin altogether, that He no longer sins, yet in his born again self there is no sin. That's a statement of the doctrine. So let's look at the doctrine. 1 John 1:8, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." If some Christian walks around and says I'm perfect, I have arrived, I never sin, they are deceiving themselves and the truth is not in them. But turn to 1 John 5:18. What do we make of this? "We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him." Now wait a minute John. You said in 1:8 that we can never say we have no sin, now in 5:18 you say now one who is born of God sins. How do we get these two statements together? Answer. We have a born of God self that does not sin. That's John's way of saying walking by the

Spirit, that's John's way of saying abiding in Him. Our born of God self, when we're walking by the Spirit, when we're abiding in Him, doesn't sin. But that doesn't mean that we're always abiding in Him, that doesn't mean we are always walking by the Spirit and that doesn't mean we're always operating by our born of God self. When we are we don't sin, when we aren't all we do is sin. John deals in contrasts just like Paul is dealing in a contrast. But the difference is in their terminology. They mean the same thing but they talk different ways. That's why John's epistle is so hard for people to understand. John's 1st epistle is probably the most misunderstood epistle in the entire NT. It's the way he talks that confuses people. Here's one more I'll show you in 1 John 3:6. Now the subject here is in 2:28. 2:28 we are commanded to "abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming." Day by day the believer is to abide because we don't know when He's coming. So it's the day by day walk; how we're walking. Either we're abiding in Him or we're not. If we are we're not sinning because if we could sin while abiding then when He appeared we wouldn't have confidence. So a sinless thing is spoken of here. Verse 29, "If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness," you can strike practices, that's a translation error, "everyone who does righteousness, is born of Him." He's talking about the born again self, the regenerate self. Have you trusted in Christ? Then you have a regenerate self, a born of God self. Now this is the source of the righteousness. It's like saying the fruit of the Spirit or something; it produces righteousness as we walk by the Spirit. Now you say, what is this born of God self thing? Chapter 3:5, "You know that He appeared in order to take away sins;" who's that? Obviously the Lord Jesus. He's the one who came to die for our sins. "and in Him there is no sin." In who? In Christ. Verse 6, "No one who abides in Him sins;" so again, in the abiding state we don't sin, that's sinless perfection. You can't be sinning and abiding at the same time. Rest of the verse, "no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him." What? This is what I mean by John being difficult to understand. In John's thinking if you are sinning you're not perceiving Jesus correctly, you are not having intimate knowledge of Him at that point. What He means is you're out of fellowship and the sin that is blocking fellowship is distorting your perception and knowledge of Christ. So now he's saying we still can sin, we sin when we don't abide in Him. When we do abide in Him we don't sin. It's sinless perfection. Why is it totally impossible to sin when we're abiding in Him? Because of verse 9. No one who is born of God sins, strike practices, that's not

in the text. “No one who is born of God sins.” so again we’re talking about the regenerate self, the born of God self, it can’t sin. Why not? Answer: “because His seed, that’s Christ’s seed, “abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” Again, the born of God self cannot sin. We can never say we are without sin as total people, but we must say that when the born of God self is under consideration, it is without sin. Why? Because the born of God self is Christ's seed in us, and in Christ there is no sin. To attribute any sin to the born of God self, even a little sin, is to attribute sin to Christ. John deals in absolute contrasts, walk in the darkness or walk in the light, walk in death or walk in life and here again is another contrast, the believer can walk in sin or walk in righteousness, and these are polar opposites just like Gal 5:16. We either walk by the Spirit or we walk by the flesh. There is no middle ground. If you walk by the Spirit you will not in any way perform the desire of the flesh. That is a sinless existence. It is maintained as long as you walk by the Spirit. When you stop walking by the Spirit you instantaneously are walking by the flesh and will perform the deeds of the flesh. When you are walking by the Spirit you will perform the deeds of the Spirit. It’s either or. John and Paul agree. They speak with different vocabulary but the same concept. Any other treatment of 1 John 3:9 creates a contradiction with 1:8. To be clear once more, as a total person no Christian can be said to be sinless, but when only looking at the Christian's born again self he must be said to be sinless because the born of God self is Christ’s seed and Christ is sinless.

Let’s hear from Dr Louis Sperry Chafer in *He That is Spiritual*, which I heartily recommend every Christian read. This is must reading. He says of Gal 5:16, “The passage is better rendered: “This I say then, By means of the Spirit be walking, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”...The human responsibility is that of a whole dependence upon the Spirit. Walking by means of the Spirit is simply walking by a definite reliance upon the ability and power of the One who indwells.” What did Jesus do? He constantly relied upon the Spirit. “The same truth, though differently presented, is stated in verse 18: “But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.” In no sense does the believer lead or direct the Spirit. He can, however, be dependent on the Spirit, and this is his exact responsibility as revealed in this passage....The results of the outworking of this divine provision are beyond our powers of estimation: “Ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

“It is often the “beginning of days” in a Christian’s life when he really believes and heeds the Word of God enough to be made aware of his own limitations, and seriously considers the exact revelation as to what he, of himself, can or cannot do, and what the Spirit who indwells him has come to do. Have we ever learned to *depend* on the Spirit to undertake those particular things which, according to the Scriptures, He is appointed to do? Do we really believe we are just as helpless as His Word declares us to be? Do we really believe He is able and waiting to do every thing we cannot do? Having begun in the Spirit...are we now to be perfected by the flesh? In meeting the impossible issues of a true Christian life, are we consciously living upon a *works-principle*, or upon a *faith-principle*? The Bible emphatically declares the believer to be upon a *faith-principle* when he is really within the plan of God for his daily life. These uncomplicated teachings are on the pages of God’s Book and an attentive Christian can hardly avoid them.”¹ What did Paul say in Gal 2:20? If you memorize one verse in all Galatians memorize this one: “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” It’s a life of faith, trusting in God, that He is sufficient for all our needs. I heartily encourage you to read Dr Chafer’s book. It is a great help in these issues of the spiritual life.

Now go back to the Lord Jesus for just a moment. What did the Lord Jesus do from very early childhood? “morning by morning, He awakens my ear to listen as a disciple.” So what are you going to do to learn to walk by the Spirit. You’re going to morning by morning wake up and study the word of God. If you have any interest in growing spiritually and learning to live the spiritual life that’s what you’ll do. The Lord Jesus Christ already laid down the model. In fact, Ps 5 recounts how David followed this model. Early in his life he woke up early and went to training. Then you read in his life when he fell with Bathsheba what does the text say in preface to that incident. It was the time when kings went out to battle but David stayed at the palace. He shouldn’t have even been there. Then it says he woke up in the evening. In the evening? What happened to this morning Bible study? Wasn’t happening. Then he looked down and he saw on the rooftop this Bathsheba. What happened? David was out of it. Way out of it. It wasn’t that David was flying along in perfect spirituality and then one day he just keeled over and made this huge mistake. It was that David made a whole series of small mistakes

that led to the big mistake. And that's how it happens in our life. We get lax, we get busy in life, we don't make time for the most important thing and before you know it we find ourselves way off the path making a mess of everything. And the point is we cannot be lax in this. If we have any interest in growing spiritually then we've got to spend time in the word every day even as Jesus did. Then when the pressures came in His life what did He say, "not my will but yours be done." See, that's submission, that's dependence. You think He could have done that if He didn't wake up morning by morning to learn the word? Not even in unfallen humanity could He have done it. Even unfallen humanity must depend upon God. How much more our fallen humanity? And if we are to depend on another person we've got to have developed trust in the other person, otherwise we can't depend on them. So to depend upon God the Holy Spirit you've got to have developed trust in God that comes only by contact with His word. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

ⁱ Louis Sperry Chafer, *He That is Spiritual* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 1967), 96-97.

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