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COVER ME

Has someone with power over you—economic, emotional, moral—ever influenced you to behave in a way that felt disobedient to the Holy Spirit?

What would happen if you chose to disobey that person instead?

How does spending time with God in prayer, Scripture, or praise, change how you sense the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

How could life be different if you decided now to obey the Holy Spirit without question or delay in everything?

Romans 8:33-34 – ³³Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God who indeed intercedes for us.

I) **Our Faithful Witness...**

We all have opinions. Some are our preferences, others our predictions, still others our idea of how the world should work. Most of us know the difference between the first two and declarations of fact. Unfortunately, it can be hard to recognize the last one as opinion. Our motives don't matter. When we impose our ideal on others we interfere with the work of the Holy Spirit. God's Spirit is responsible for guiding us in all things toward salvation—His ideal. He is our faithful witness, who testifies to our inner being, good or bad. Life in the world will batter your emotions and convince you of either false righteousness or guilt. Spend time with God instead, who will lead you to your best self.

NOVEMBER 9TH, 2025

♦**Let them talk**: No matter how we live, someone will be outraged. Many of those people are immaterial to us. Not all. Some have influence, power, even moral authority over us. The intersection of these peoples' opinions of an ethical life is an impossibly small target. This puts us in a conundrum. Whose standard should we adopt? We should start by accepting that those who we ignore will be those "who will bring any charge against God's elect (Romans 8:33)?" Jesus alone knows the narrow way of life. Follow Him and let others talk.

♦**Talk is cheap**: If we are concerned with worldly things, our worldly reputation, we must pay attention to what people say. If we care about our soul, it is our standing before God that matters. Are we at peace with Him, having trusted and obeyed Him to the best of our ability? "It is God who justifies (v33)." All those talking about our misdeeds miss the point that talk is cheap. God has already justified His chosen people. Obedient action in the face of accusers is the high cost of accepting His justification.

II) Has the Power...

This is Christian reality. We will miss the mark formed by the opinions of most—probably everyone. The Spirit will direct us to do unreasonable, dangerous, radical, even downright stupid things in faith that He will protect and enrich our lives through them. He confronts us with the question, who has the power over us? We can often sit comfortably between the two kingdoms. He ensures that one day we will not. Spend time with Him now so that on that day you know your master's voice.

♦**Words are powerless**: Accusing is one thing. Anyone can do it. It is uncomfortable to be accused of evil. Reputations are often ruined even if the verdict is innocent. But not everyone gets to determine the verdict. The one responsible for judgment is expected to be impartial and properly trained on the law as it is intended, not an amateur interpretation of it. "Who is to condemn (v34)?" Condemnation is an act of authority. Serve the world as master and empower others to condemn you. Serve God and all the world's words are powerless.

♦**Action is truth**: God is unmoved by words. Yes, we think and speak prayer and praise. It's empty and meaningless when we live contrarily. Action is truth. Otherwise, Jesus could have preached our salvation. Our supreme authority is One who acted, "It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised (v34)." His actions are the truth of God's love, they move the Father to forgive us and pave the narrow way of life for us. Our decision to bond with, listen to, and obey God's Spirit in opposition to the world confirms this reality.

III) Over the Tattletale...

There is a difference between witnesses and tattletales. Witnesses instigate an investigation or state the truth of a matter in a proceeding of justice. Tattletales distort the justice system into an instrument of illegitimate personal power. Most of us have experienced how a tattletale is quickly deposed by the authority figure. Legitimate witnesses deserve all our respect over the tattletale. Walk with and respond to Jesus, who bears witness to our heart.

♦**Position of authority**: People with worldly power over us threaten to expose us. Expose us as wrongdoers or to desperation or to horror. Jesus is the opposite. He does not threaten us. He wants to cover us. Cover us from harm, moral depravity, and the condemnation of His Father. In the heavenly kingdom, those who accuse us are powerless. It is Jesus "who is at the right hand of God (v34)," the position of authority to determine our fate.

♦**Justice is served**: We have many accusers. We have One "who indeed intercedes for us (v34)." He's the One who knows our heart and mind. He knows whether we love Him more than the world. Whether justice is served by us giving Him everything we are because He gave His all for us. He knows how to investigate the truth of our hearts. His investigation will often put us at odds with those others with worldly power over us. His ways require us to violate the opinion others hold about what is right. Come under Jesus' cover and spend time with Him. It's the best way to get out of the noise.