Rumble Strip - Part 2

# The Gentle Whisper Within

## (1 Corinthians 2:9-12, 16)

We are in part two of our series entitled Rumble Strip and we’ve been talking about those little lines on the highway, those grooves or bumps that have one function, and that is to make a noise and a vibration that you can hear and feel when you drive over them, warning you not to keep going in that direction. We’ve all experienced them on the shoulder of the road and in the middle of the road; and there is a need for them on the left and on the right, on the inside and the outside of the road, because they warn us when we are drifting. They keep us from danger, giving us advance notification, warning us before we’ve gone too far, before we’ve crossed over the line.

Wouldn’t you agree that it is so much better to have a warning then to have to fix the damage afterwards? In fact, many of you can probably look back on your life and think of at least a few things that you regret having done. And so, wouldn’t it have been so much better if there had been a warning as you were moving towards danger?

Well, today what we want to do is learn to listen for those Rumble Strips Within that God has put in place and training ourselves to listen to him when he speaks. It’s an internal Rumble Strip, that Gentle Whisper Within that could save your life. In fact, if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, your own personal salvation was actually a response to the nudging, the warning, and the conviction of the Holy Spirit. It was that rumbling that caused you to respond to the Father’s grace and receive Jesus loving sacrifice as your own.

And last week we saw how the apostle Paul described just how amazing it is to follow Jesus. We saw in the first half of Ephesians how God gives us his best and it’s his blessings that begin to change our behavior from the inside out because of the rumbling of the Holy Spirit. And so, it’s the Holy Spirit that begins ministering to us and making the Father real to us as it is written:

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"— but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us” (1 Corinthians 2:9-12).

And so, it’s the Spirit of God who searches all things, even your thoughts, because no one knows what’s going on in your mind except your spirit, but as followers of Jesus we have received the Spirit who is from God.

We’re talking today about Rumble Strips Within and this is so important because we all have blind spots. But in his grace, God by his Spirit has entered into our personality and through the Holy Spirit he reveals to us the deep things of God. That is so helpful because when something is in your blind spot even though you look at it you can’t see it. And so, blind spots are dangerous because what you don’t know can hurt you and if you make a decision with a blind spot it may have serious consequences.

In our culture today many of us boldly go into unknown areas following the directions on our GPS. And so, we’re navigating down multilane highways with exits, detours, interchanges, and everything is all twisted and confusing when suddenly your GPS tells you to take that exit. Quickly we determine that its not that exit, but it’s this exit, and you’ve got to move quickly before you miss your exit. And so, what do you do, you look in your rearview mirror, you look in your side mirror, and you begin moving over when suddenly a horn blows aggressively. You see, you looked in your mirrors, but the car was so close that it was in your blind spot.

If you have driven on multilane highways for long it’s very likely that at some point you have begun to make a lane change only to be interrupted by a horn honking because there was a car in your blind spot. I wonder today what you have allowed to get so close that it is in your blind spot? The reason why I’m talking about blind spots is because there are some of you who have blind spots where you won’t allow your faith to touch, you don’t allow the Holy Spirit to penetrate certain areas of your life, and so there is a potential danger because you’ve allowed a blind spot in your life.

What I want to do is try by the help of God to give you the tools or resources to remove the blind spots in your life, because there may be something right beside you that you don’t even see. Fortunately for us, there is something within, or I should say someone within to help us, so that you can know the deep things of God. Of course, we can’t enter into the mind of God, but we can know the deep things of God, because the Bible tells us,

"Who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16).

And so, in this series we’ve been talking about drifting off into a slumber, doing something dangerous in our sleep, and those blind spots in our lives. And so we need advance notification, some form of early warning, and we need to be awakened to the dangers to the left and to the right. We need to be alerted to the potential disaster up ahead and that’s what the apostle Paul said to the church in Ephesus. He says,

"Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you" (Ephesians 5:14).

And sometimes we need someone to shake us like that, someone to say be careful, because if you go over there it could be disastrous and you’re going to hurt yourself.

I’m reminded of one of those moments in my early childhood, one of those precious memories from my earliest years, a time when I shared a bedroom with two of my brothers. Now, as some of you know I am the oldest of seven kids, but back when I was the oldest of five kids, there were three of us boys sharing the same bedroom. And so, we had a bunkbed with a trundle bed which pulled out from underneath the bottom bunk.

On this one particular night, I was sleeping on the bottom of the bunk bed when I was awakened by this terrified screaming. Sitting straight up in bed I looked next to me in the trundle bed where I could just barely see both of my brothers in the bed crying and screaming. As my parents rushed in and turned on the light it became apparent that my brother in the top bunk rolled out of bed and fell onto my other brother in the trundle bed. Fortunately, nobody was seriously injured and aside from being startled and bruised they were able to settle down and go back to sleep.

My point in telling that story is that there wasn’t anything to wake my brother in those crucial, critical moments as he was tossing and turning, rolling towards the edge. There wasn’t anything to warn my brother and protect him from rolling over the edge. There wasn’t a guard rail or anything to keep them from falling. Needless to say, it wasn’t long after that that my parents got one of those guardrails, which are really necessary bunkbed accessories, but how much better would it have been if he had been awakened? Wouldn’t it have been better if he had been warned, “maybe you should be on the bottom bunk?”

In Ephesians chapter 5, the apostle Paul said, “Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:15-18).

It’s a warning that we need to be careful, we need to be wise, not being foolish, but understanding what the Lord’s will is, and so what is the Lord’s will? Well, the apostle says, don’t get drunk, or don’t use mind altering substances, because these things lead to sensuality and immorality. In other words, he says be careful because they will take you over the edge, and so he says instead here’s the Lord’s will. He says, “Be filled with the Spirit” because we can be filled with something inside of our souls that will warn us, that will help us to sense right from wrong, and it’s right there, it’s available, it just needs to be tapped into, it needs to be released.

You see, generally speaking this is a Rumble Strip built into every believer’s spiritual DNA, but the thing is that it’s very quiet. In fact, I like the description when Elijah encountered the voice of God in first Kings. He was exhausted and depressed, hiding in a cave when God called him to come out into his presence. The Bible says,

“Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper" (1 Kings 19:11-12).

In other words, the voice of God was a gentle whisper, it’s quiet and gentle, we can hear it, and we can feel it. The Spirit of God is a rumble strip, it’s within each believer, and we can tap into it because God wants you to be careful how you live, not as unwise but as wise.

And so, God puts this internal Rumble Strip in place to guide you and keep you from danger. He’s not trying to keep you from having fun, he’s trying to keep you from living unwisely. And so, you may be considering doing something and there’s this rumbling, you feel the pressure, you hear the noise, because God is trying to keep you from what? He’s trying to keep you from danger, trying to keep you from going over the edge, trying to keep you from a head on collision. He’s trying to keep you from an early grave, from a prison cell, from bankruptcy, from cirrhosis of the liver, and so we want to be sensitive to that still small voice, that rumbling on the inside.

Now, we may not see the danger, we may not understand it, but we need to trust that God has our best interests in mind. He’s trying to keep us from disaster, from falling over the edge, from the consequences of unwise decisions. That’s why the Bible says,

“Don’t be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is” (Ephesians 5:17).

In other words, it’s foolish not to obey what the Spirit is saying, and yet I wonder how many of us have been so foolish as to silence our own inner warning system. You see, it’s the Holy Spirit who has been sent to help us, he’s in our corner, and he wants to bless you and cause you to prosper. He’s not trying to withhold something from you, he’s not trying to keep you from having fun on Friday night, he’s working all things for the good of those who love him and who’ve been called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).

And the problem with ignoring that quiet voice of the Holy Spirit rumbling on the inside is that one thing leads to another. We begin to think that I can handle this, I’ve got this, and maybe you can, but the reality is that the devil doesn’t play checkers, he plays chess. In other words, he’s thinking three, four, or five moves down the road. And so, he’s thinking, “If I can get her here, I can get her there, then I can get her over here, and over there to checkmate, to in the hospital, to the jail door slamming shut, to the gavel slamming down or the lid on the casket. You see, the devil is thinking of the big picture just like you and I should be, because the more you ignore the rumbling of the Holy Spirit the quieter it gets and the harder it is to hear.

That’s why the Bible says in first Thessalonians chapter 5,

“Do not quench the Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:18, ESV).

Another translation says, “Do not put out the Spirit's fire.” And that’s important to remember because it already starts out as a whisper and the more you ignore it, the quieter it gets. And so, it just gets fainter and fainter and fainter until you can’t hear it anymore. And when you keep quenching the Spirit you no longer hear and feel the rumble strips and one thing leads to another, because the rumble strip leads to the shoulder, and the shoulder leads to the ditch. Or that rumble strip may be on the double yellow line, which leads to a head on collision and another cross on the side of the road.

Therefore, you want to pay attention to the rumble strips, because the more you respond to it, the more attentive you are to the Holy Spirit, leaning into his presence, the more you will see God move in your life in ways that you never could have imagined. And so, the more you respond to the Holy Spirit, saying I’m not going to do this or that, because the Spirit is rumbling in me, the more you are able to anticipate a great move of God. And as you’re walking with the Holy Spirit, that’s what the Bible says,

“Walk in the Spirit…” (Galatians 5:16, NKJV).

As you’re walking, as you make decisions and do things according to the will of God, you will sense the peace of God. And when he says to jump or duck, you’re going to jump or duck, because you trust that he sees what you don’t see. And the more you do it, walking in the Spirit, living that way, the better you are going to get at responding, because you’re going to start recognizing the patterns.

And so, now you start to anticipate the rumbling, and the more you respond to the rumbling, taking a corrective action, the less rumbling you’re going to experience. And so, you’re anticipating things as you’re moving, you’re leaning into the curves before you get to them, and you’re sensing the direction God is leading you. In fact, the Bible says,

“A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it” (Proverbs 22:3).

And so, you can foresee the danger ahead and take the necessary precautions so that you don’t suffer the consequences.

This is what Paul was talking about in second Corinthians, when he says that we’re not unaware of the devil’s schemes (2 Corinthians 2:11). We should be recognizing the patterns because we know his playbook, we’re not unaware of his schemes. And so, there are patterns and the better we become at responding to God’s voice, the less he is going to be rumbling, because we’ve learned to spot the patterns and we know the danger zones. We’re going to find that groove, we’re going to see it coming, we’re going to lean into it and we’re not going to put ourselves in dangerous situations.

For example, the person who is trying to diet shouldn’t be hanging out at Dunkin’ Donuts just because they like their coffee. You see, you don’t go to Dunkin’ Donuts not to eat the doughnuts, and so maybe you need to find another place to get your coffee because we’re noticing the patterns. We know ourselves and so we don’t put ourselves in a place where God is going to start rumbling and that’s why the apostle Paul says,

“If by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” (Romans 8:13-14).

And so, as you keep in step with the Spirit, walking with the Spirit, and being responsive to what he says, the rumbling will become less and less. But the thing is that the rumbling will actually get louder and louder as it becomes easier for God to lead you and he will take you to more places. You see, God doesn’t make rules because he’s on a power trip, he rumbles and says no because he wants to keep you from dangerous situations. He says don’t, because he wants to protect you and when he knows that you’ll listen to him, then he will take you more places.

It’s like, when our kids were younger, we would never take them very far on vacation because they just couldn’t handle the ride, they just didn’t have any self-control. And so, our hope has always been that when they get older we could take them more places, but it just never happened.

I wonder where your lack of responsiveness to the Holy Spirit is keeping God from being able to take you? You know, I wonder what he wants your life to look like, where he wants you to be in your business, or what he wants to be able to trust you with? First, he has to know that when he says no that you will stop and when he says go that you will go even if you don’t understand it and it doesn’t make sense. I am reminded of Simon Peter, who had fished all night, he was cleaning his nets when Jesus said,

"Put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets” (Luke 5:4-5).

That’s what I’m talking about, it’s the kind of faith that says, “because you say so, I’m going to obey you, I’m going to trust you, and I’m going to do what you say.” And I believe you will be surprised to discover what God will do with the life that is completely surrendered to him.

You see, when we get to that place of trusting him, responding to his rumbling, anticipating the rumbling, he will take us where he wants to take us. That’s why the apostle Paul says in verse 17,

“Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is” (Ephesians 5:17).

And so, your obedience, your responsiveness, means that you will get to see what God’s will is for you. You will get to see what he has been dreaming about for you from the foundation of the world. There were specific things on God’s mind when he was creating you and we know that because the Bible says,

“We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10).

But the reality is that our lack of obedience limits the opportunities that God is willing to give to you. You see, if you can’t be led by the Spirit, he can’t lead you where he actually wants you to go.

And so, as we close, I want to encourage you to spend some time in quietness, reading the Word of God and then take a few minutes listening for that still small voice. Take some time this week to be still in his presence, leaning into the whisper, and respond to the rumble because it will keep you from missing your potential. And none of us want to waste our lives, and so would you make a move towards God? Make a move towards God today, obeying the rumble, telling him you’re sorry for when you didn’t listen, and watch what he will do in your life.

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