

Led By God's Spirit, Pt. 2  
Romans 8:14  
June 2, 2013

If there is one area of teaching believers have a hard time figuring out, it's how God leads us and reveals His will to us. Kevin DeYoung in his book *Just Do Something* tells about Walter Houston from Tupelo, Mississippi. He loved Christ and wanted his life to count. He died at 91, waiting around the house for 70 years for God tell Him what to do with his life. He never got a clear word from God about it. In the meantime he spent his days fixing stuff. Poor Walter, you feel for him. He was expecting God to do what God never told us in the Bible He would do. One pastor I admire used to say God is free to do whatever He wants to do, but we can expect Him to do what He said He'd do in the Bible. And in the Bible God assures us that every believer is led by the Holy Spirit. But what does that mean?

Romans 8:14 "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." One thing is clear in verse 14. Every person who is led by the Spirit, guaranteed, is a son or daughter of God. The big theme of Romans 8 is the assurance of salvation for everyone who comes to Christ. All this teaching about the Holy Spirit – He indwells every believer, He guarantees the resurrection of our bodies, and He is given to us to empower us to mortify or put to death the deeds of our bodies, and now every believer is led by the Spirit – all of this is to give us absolute assurance, the guarantee that God will bring us to glory. Romans 8:32 says "If God is for us, who can be against us?" There's no greater truth than that!

Part of our personal assurance is knowing that the Spirit is leading us. What does this mean? Basically, the Spirit is leading us out of a life of living for our flesh into a life that pleases God. The Spirit's big goal and purpose for you as a believer is to restore the glory of God's image in you and me, ultimately conforming us to be just like Christ.

Look at 2 Corinthians 3:18 for a moment: *But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.* This is such a powerful verse. God by His Spirit in our lives is restoring the glory of His Son in each of us!

### **WRONG METHODS OF SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION**

Last week we looked at that doctrine of mortification – putting sins to death by the power of the Spirit. This morning we're going to the positive side, called vivification, or what the Spirit is leading us to, how He is renewing us. Before we tear into that, I want you to see some of the ways God isn't using to change us. These are from a booklet by Jim Newheiser called, *Help, I Want to Change*.

Demonic Deliverance. Some think all our problems are demonic and we need to have them cast out so you have Deliverance ministries. We are in a spiritual warfare, but casting out demons isn't the answer.

Zap Theology. So many think there is a secret, mystical key that will instantly solve your problems, or a magic prayer formula that will produce instant and dramatic results. Shazaam! and all your problems are over. But Scripture clearly teaches godliness is the fruit of a persistent, disciplined pursuit of God.

Medicate your problems. True, drugs will ease pain and relieve depression, and there are times for medication, but our spiritual problems aren't physical but in the heart. No medication can deal with the idols and passions of our hearts.

Tap Your Inner Strength. The world loves this one. Find the resources in yourself. But Christ said without Me you can do nothing. Our flesh will never cure the problem of our flesh.

Moralism. Rules are helpful, we need them, but rules don't change the heart.

Recovery groups. There are oodles of these, for just about every problem you can imagine, from drug addiction to divorce recovery to overeaters anonymous. But typically they aren't based on Scripture alone, and the advice is usually man-centered, not Christ-centered.

All these are the world's efforts to help people change. Some help on the surface and temporarily. But Scripture clearly teaches that God has given us all we need in the Scripture to help us grow and change – the grace of the gospel, the power of the Spirit, the direction of the Scriptures, the ministry of prayer, and the mutual encouragement and counsel of God's people. Romans 8:14 focuses on the power of the Spirit to lead us.

### **How Does the Spirit Lead Us?**

First, this isn't reserved for some special super saints. Every believer is led by the Spirit. How do we know? Because verse 14 assures us, these are God's children. One of the great mistakes people make is to think there are two or three levels of believers, some are super saints who have the Spirit and the rest of us are just plugging along in pretty much a mediocre life, maybe even envying "great" Christians who seem to have almost a direct line with God. There's that problem of thinking there must be "something more." I don't have the joy that Jack has, what am I missing? So you have people praying for the Spirit to come and sort of explode inside of them and transform them into incredibly strong, mature, effective Christians. But remember, when you receive Christ, you receive Christ's Spirit. If you have the Spirit of Christ, then you have Christ (v. 10), and if you have Christ, you have everything. Every believer has the Spirit and is being led by the Spirit.

Second, the Spirit is always leading us. When God led Israel through the wilderness, it was every day and night by a pillar of cloud or fire. He never left them. The word for "led" in our verse is a present passive indicative. That means the Spirit of God keeps on leading us. We don't ask Him to lead us; He is leading us. And it's a fact, not a command.

Third, Paul is not talking here about divine guidance. This isn't the Spirit talking to you or nudging you in your inner being. This isn't about asking God whom you should marry, or whether you should buy this car or go to Syria as a missionary. God does guide us through this world, but He doesn't do it through visions and impressions and, as DeYoung said, "liver quivers." An old friend of ours was telling us recently about meeting his daughter's future husband and, being of another theology than ours, he claimed the Spirit told him right there on the spot that this was the man for his daughter. Really? We have to be careful about interpreting your good or bad feelings and thoughts as the Spirit's speaking to you. That's not what this leading is about, plus God never promised He'd lead us this way. I appreciate J. I. Packer's comment: "The true way to honor the Holy Spirit as our guide is to honor the Holy Scriptures through which He guides us."

This leading is about the Spirit being alive as a Person in our hearts, working on our minds, our affections, and our will. He is influencing us to put sin to death, and He is influencing us to put on godliness, or the fruit of the Spirit. How does He do it? The Spirit is the author of the Scripture. People want the Spirit to do an end run around the Scriptures. No, all Scripture is God-Spirited (theopneustos in 2 Timothy 3:16). Holy men of God were moved by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will never lead you contrary to the Word of God. The Word of God and the Spirit of God do the same things: They teach, convict, correct, and train us in godliness.

So the Spirit of God leads by applying the truths of the Word to our mind so we begin to think God's way. Our thinking needs lots of help. One Christian college advertises with the slogan, "Thinking Biblically About Everything." I like that. The Spirit grows us by renewing our minds, our thinking. The Spirit influences our affections. We hunger and thirst for God's Word, we delight in it, we get fired up about it, like Jeremiah 15:16, "Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your Word became for me a joy and the delight of my heart." Where's that coming from? Not our flesh.

And then the Spirit influences our will. When we choose to obey God, where's that coming from? The Spirit is motivating us to obedience. He isn't driving us or forcing us or pushing us, but He is leading us. Can we resist? Absolutely. He's always leading us in the background of our hearts, but we can quench Him by refusing to listen to His Word (1 Thessalonians 5:19-20). We can grieve Him by letting our flesh out of his cage and use cutting, nasty, harsh words, Ephesians 4:29-30. We can reject Him by letting our lust drive us to immoral thoughts or behavior. Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8 *For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. Consequently, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.*

If this is how the Spirit leads us, how important is it to fill our minds with the Word of God? Ephesians 5:18 says we are to be filled with the Spirit, and Colossians 3:16 says we are to let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly! The Spirit of God takes the Word of God in your heart and gets busy working to transform your life. Philippians 2:12-13 says we are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling because God is at work in you to will – influencing your will, and to do of God's good pleasure.

### **Where Is the Spirit Leading Us?**

If the Spirit is leading us by influencing our minds, affections, and will, where is He leading us? Here are several targets of the Spirit's leading you can count on for every day:

First, the Spirit is leading you to God every day. The Father is looking for worshipers to worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. The Spirit gives us desires to meet with God, to be aware of God, to love and fear God as our Father.

The Spirit is leading you to do battle with sin. The Spirit comes and rains on our fleshly parade. That inner conflict you and I have with sin every day is evidence that the Spirit is on the move in your life. If you are fighting temptations in your heart, you are glorifying God! The Spirit will motivate you and convict you and when you cave and sin you will feel terrible and even after confessing it you may still feel like such a shameful piece of dirt. That's all good, that's all the Spirit leading in your life, exposing the ugliness of your sin.

The Spirit will always lead you to Christ and His cross. Always. When you survey the wondrous cross and realize how gracious and loving and merciful God has been and how you are totally dependent on the cross for your eternal relationship with God, that's the Spirit at work in your heart. The Spirit is leading you to love and treasure Christ.

The Spirit will always lead you to submission to and obedience to the Word of God. No one can ever say the Spirit led me into this immoral relationship because He told me it was OK. It may have felt OK, but it was flat out wrong and you were following the wrong "spirit"! The Spirit led me to invest in this financial scheme – only to find out it was a Ponzi scheme! The Spirit led me to this new relationship with this really loving lady and now I'm thinking He is leading me to divorce my wife. Many years ago a husband, a believer, seriously shared these thoughts with me. Sin can really cloud, confuse, and deceive our minds! The Spirit always leads us to obedience to God's Word.

The Spirit will always lead you to serving God's people in the body of Christ. He has given every believer giftedness to loving and serving God's people.

### **The Spirit's Fruit Production In Your Life – Galatians 5:16ff**

The Spirit will always lead you to grow the fruit of the Spirit. Turn to Galatians 5:16 and following. This is the best commentary on Romans 8:14. We're back to the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. It's a war. The flesh wants to control your mind and body and produce his selfish, ugly deeds. The Spirit wants to produce this beautiful fruit through your mind and body. So you have this conflict. We feel it all the time. Here's the big issue – will you follow your flesh or the Spirit? Will you act out what your flesh wants to do or will you walk in the power of the Spirit? God is into raising fruit trees. You and I are His orchard. These enemies of the Spirit's fruit are like bugs and insects and vermin and blight and whatever.

### Enemies of the Spirit's Fruit

Let's grab a few of these wretches and ID them. Sexual sins. This would include pornography. Pornography attacks everything the Spirit is leading us to. Anger issues. Our flesh demands to be heard, right? It's not fair. You can't do that to me! Pride and arrogance issues – jealousy is always the rotten fruit of pride. Addictive behaviors like drinking, carousing. If these things characterize your life, just like Romans 8 said, you don't have the Spirit and will not inherit heaven.

### The Spirit's Fruit

But the Spirit is all about growing these fruit in your life. If you have the Spirit, guaranteed, the Spirit is growing this good stuff, because all of this is the glory and image of Christ Himself! None of us have any of these in perfection. Some of our fruit are really small. But they are there. And we need to submit our hearts to the power of the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, rely on the truth that the Spirit is at work here, pray that the Spirit would motivate you to grow these more and more, and your Christian life will be to the glory of God Almighty.

So the Spirit is leading you to becoming a loving person, who is living not for yourself but for the good of others.

The Spirit is leading you to becoming a joyful person, even when trials and struggles are there, you know God is at work, there's hope, and the joy of the Lord is your strength.

The Spirit is leading you to becoming a peaceful, content person, not all upset about what you're not getting or don't have.

The Spirit is leading you to becoming a patient person, restraining our words and actions, very long-fused with other people, remembering how patient God's been with you.

The Spirit is leading you to becoming a kind person. What is a kind person? Thoughtful about others, aware of the burdens others are carrying, an ear to hear, a heart that truly cares.

The Spirit is leading you to becoming a good person, meeting the needs of others without grumbling or being critical.

The Spirit is leading you to becoming a faithful person, keeping your word, showing up on time, reliable and trustworthy, keeping your wedding vows. Cal Thomas, in a recent interview at Patrick Henry College, spoke of the character of public officials. He said a legitimate question is: "Senator, if we can't believe a promise you have freely made to your wife, on what basis do we judge your credibility when you make a promise to the country?"

The Spirit is leading you to becoming a meek or gentle person, not someone who makes sure everyone knows how good you've been, and not touchy and easily offended. In the story of *Come Back, Barbara*, John Miller, a pastor and missionary, asked his prodigal,

rebellious daughter, Barbara, if he would only take a memory of her to heaven. He was headed on a mission to Uganda at a dangerous time and didn't know if he would see her again. Barbara exploded in anger, but later God used that to bring her to himself. She later said how her dad never lost his composure in the face of her anger. That's gentleness or meekness.

And then, the Spirit is leading you to becoming a self-controlled person, keeping your self-pleasing, fleshly cravings under control, applying all diligence to grow this fruit more and more!

#### SO WHAT?

Only those led by the Spirit of Christ have the capacity to grow this fruit. If you don't know Christ, you can try to imitate them, but that's all they'll be, a cheap imitation. As many as are led by the Spirit, these are God's sons and daughters. You need the Christ who saves us from our sin and then gives us His Spirit to transform us into His likeness.

Believer, the Spirit is leading you to grow this fruit in your life, in your heart, through your thinking, words, and relationships. Identify your specific sins of the flesh. Kill them as soon as possible. If they crawl out of their cage, confess them and turn away from them. And pray for God's help to grow these beautiful Christlike fruit. People who are led by the Spirit of God are producing these fruit of the Spirit, and these are the sons and daughters of God.