

“FOR GOD SENT NOT HIS SON INTO THE WORLD TO CONDEMN THE WORLD; BUT THAT THE WORLD THROUGH HIM MIGHT BE SAVED” (JOHN 3:17)

LED BY THE SPIRIT

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Since the beginning of this present move of the Holy Spirit, we have heard it taught that spiritual maturity or coming into sonship is evidenced by our being led by the Spirit. *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God”* (Romans 8:14, KJV). Many times when we have been faced with a dilemma or have been confused about something, someone will say to us, “Just be led by the Spirit.” I know that many have asked, “What does it mean to be led by the Spirit? What does it look like in daily life?”

First, let us look into the Old Testament and see what God promised that he would covenant with His people in these last days. *“For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to*

walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (Ezekiel 36:24-27, KJV).

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Jeremiah 31:31-33, NKJV).

“Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever; for the good of them, and of their children after them:

And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. ⁴¹ Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul” (Jeremiah 32:37-41, KJV).

Now let us take a look at the Mosaic Covenant. *“And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel” (Exodus 19:3-6, NKJV).*

Notice the difference in the Mosaic Covenant that was a bilateral covenant and this new covenant that is a unilateral covenant. In the Mosaic Covenant God spelled out the blessings He would bestow on His people. However, He also said that those blessings would be contingent on His people obeying all His commands. Of course we know that although the people accepted God’s offer and said they would obey all God’s commands, they did not do so, and as a result they did not receive the fullness of God’s blessings. *“Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever” (Deuteronomy 5:29, NKJV)!*

For a moment let us go all the way back to Genesis chapter 12 and what God said to Abram when He gave them what we now call the Abrahamic Covenant. God said, *“Now the Lord had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, From your family. And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you. And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:1-4, NKJV).*

From the Abrahamic Covenant to all the other covenants God has made with man, we can see where God’s heart has always been. He has wanted to reach and restore the world He created, and He has chosen to do it through a people for His name’s sake, a people who would manifest His glory to the world, a people who would be an example of what God will do for those who obey Him. As you read on in this article, keep this, God’s ultimate objective, in front of you. The calling of God is of such magnificence and importance that to be part of it makes whatever sacrifice is required worth it. And it will require sacrifice.

In this new covenant God provides the resources for both parts of the covenant. He not only defines what He will do for us, His people, but He Himself also provides to us the resources to fulfill our responsibilities of the agreement. He said He would remove our stony heart and give us a heart of flesh. He said He would put His Spirit within us and cause us to walk in His statutes and keep His judgments. God keeps His promises.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells us how this promise will be fulfilled.

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3, KJV). When we are born again God removes our stony heart which is dead to Him and gives us a heart of flesh which is alive to Him. He places His Holy Spirit within us who enables us to walk in His statutes and to keep His judgments. Our entire spiritual DNA is changed. *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17, KJV).*

When a man or woman, boy or girl is born again he/she may have an experience that is marked by intense emotion accompanied by some immediate and dramatic changes in their lives. Others may have a much different experience with little discernable emotion and with no immediate outward changes. Regardless of the outward manifestation, the same spiritual reality occurs. We become inhabited with the very Son of God through His Spirit, and as a result, are partakers of Christ’s divine nature. *“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these **ye might be partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:3-4, KJV).*

Sometimes truths like this this are difficult to truly comprehend. We get so consumed with the things of daily life that we forget or perhaps never totally understood what God provided for us. Nevertheless, God, through our conversion, has given us the ability to comprehend these truly miraculous provisions. *“Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to naught: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?*

Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:6-16, KJV).

God has given us His secret wisdom that we may know the things that He has freely given to us of Himself. We even have the mind of Christ because Christ lives within us. The Holy Spirit enables us to see and know Jesus and all that we are and have in Him. *"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you" (John 16:12-15, KJV).*

Even though these are familiar scriptures to us, it is important that we take time to meditate on them until the factual reality of them becomes fixed in our hearts because it is foundational to our ability to be led by the Spirit.

If you are like me, you know that the reality of this new life comes face-to-face with the reality of sin all around us, and our new life is confronted with temptation to deny its power more often than we would like. Why is it that with all the promises and provisions that God has made for his people, many, if not most, Christians still struggle with sin?

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:1-4, KJV).

This passage of scripture tells us that **we are dead to sin**. Sin no longer has the same power over us that it once had. Before we came to Christ, we had no choice but to sin, because we were born in sin and with no power to resist it. *"Likewise reckon (count) ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Romans 6:11-12, KJV).*

Paul tells us here that we do not have to let sin reign in our bodies. However, this still does not totally address our dilemma. Let's turn to the first Epistle of John for more light. *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8, KJV).* The apostle John in this verse is not saying we are necessarily presently sinning, but he is saying that the remnants of sin in a general way still dwell in our flesh. The word "sin" in this verse is not referring to any particularly sinful behavior that is currently active. It refers to the tendency to sin that resides in the flesh. Listen to how the apostle Paul describes this. *"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Romans 7:18, KJV).*

Then in 1 John verse 10 we read, *"If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."* John is saying that we all have sinned in the past. If we deny that, we are liars. However, he does not say that we are necessarily sinning in the present. In fact in 1 John 2 verse 1a we read, *"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not."* This statement indicates that though we have sinned in the past and that the remnants of sin still remain in our flesh, it is not necessary that we transgress into sin.

In Paul's letter to the church at Galatia, he sums all this up in the following scripture, *"Here is my advice. Live your whole life in the Spirit and you will not satisfy the desires of your lower nature. For the whole energy of the lower nature is set against the Spirit, while the whole power of the Spirit is contrary to the lower nature. Here is the conflict, and that is why you are not free to do what you want to do. **But if you follow the leading of the Spirit, you stand clear of the Law"** (Galatians 5:16-18, J.B. Phillips).*

We must come to grips with the reality that although as Paul says in Romans 6, we are dead to sin, sin is not completely dead to us. In 1 Corinthians 2:16 we see that with our conversion we received the mind of Christ. However, we still have our own mind too. In Romans 12:2 Paul says this: *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (NKJV).* We renew our minds by allowing the mind of Christ to operate on our minds. This requires conscious effort and personal discipline. When we think with the mind of Christ we will soon find out that a lot of our own thoughts must be taken captive and thrown into prison (2 Corinthians 10:5). We still have a carnal nature, and there is a struggle, a conflict, a war if you will that goes on in our daily lives. The good news is that we now have the Holy Spirit within us to enable us to do in our heart of hearts, in our new heart of flesh that God has put into us, what we really want to do. May God help us with our "want to."

Now we are back to where this article started. How do we resist the temptation to sin that finds a welcome reception in our flesh (carnal nature)? We read in Galatians 5:25 *“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”* Again, what does this look like in our daily lives? The answer is found in the moment-by-moment exercise of **repentance and faith**. We must realize that although repentance of past sins and faith in Christ were absolutely necessary for our conversion, they are also absolutely necessary to our daily moment-to-moment walking in the Spirit. We never outgrow our need for the Cross. For many Christians the feeling is that once Christ has forgiven their sins, it is now their job to put their noses to the grindstone and get to work living out the Christian life. There is partial truth in this. We do participate in the change process and must cooperate with the Holy Spirit. However, we must never, ever forget that the grace of God by which we were saved is the same grace that is absolutely necessary for the life-transformation process. Take note of the following scriptures:

*“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, **The just shall live by faith**”* (Romans 1:17, KJV). *“But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, **The just shall live by faith**”* (Galatians 3:11, KJV). *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me”* (Galatians 2:20, KJV). Most of the modern translations of the Bible use the term “faith in the Son of God.” I like the King James Version best for this verse because Paul states that it is the **faith of Christ** operating in him by which he lives his life out in the body.

We see from these scriptures that the first step in walking by the Spirit is moment-by-moment acknowledging and exercising faith in Christ. One way of describing faith is looking at Christ, reminding ourselves of who He is, what he has done, and who we are in Him. When the reality of this sinks in we can say with the apostle Paul, *“For the love of Christ constraineth (compels) us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that **they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again**”* (2 Corinthians 5:14-15, KJV). Again in Acts 17:28 *“For in him (Christ) we live and move and have our being...”*

We see that we ourselves no longer have the right to allow ourselves to occupy the throne of our lives. Christ now has that sole right. He has earned that right, and we gave it to Him when we accepted Him into our hearts. *“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body^{al} and in your spirit, which are God’s”* (1 Corinthians 6:19-20, NKJV).

His demonstrated love for us is so amazing that it compels us to place our faith in Him to enable us to turn from sin. Think of this; *“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world”* (1 John 2:1-2, KJV); *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9 KJV).
[To Be Continued In The March 2017 Issue]

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