

a study of the *Holy Spirit*

Lesson 5: The Leading of the Holy Spirit

1. 📖 Introduce the session by discussing the different reactions to the question arising from Romans 8:14— “What does a person mean when he says the Holy Spirit is leading them?”
Note: the majority today would explain this in a mystical, sensational way.
2. Because the phrase "led by the Spirit" is so confusing we need to examine it with the Scriptures. Here is a phrase which describes the basis for the religious practices and beliefs of many – they have been "led by the Spirit" to practice certain things. They thus appeal to a subjective authority for religious faith. Perhaps there is no other phrase which confuses the operation of the Holy Spirit more than this.

📖 Some see the Holy Spirit's leading as solely miraculous. They appeal to these texts:

- a. Jesus was "led" by the Spirit (Matthew 4:1; Luke 4:1).
 - b. 📖 Philip was "led" by the Spirit (Acts 8:26, 39).
 - c. 📖 Peter was "led" by the Spirit (Acts 10:19, 20).
 - d. 📖 Paul was "led" by the Spirit (Acts 16:6, 7).
3. The "leading of the Spirit" is understood as we consider how the Godhead "led" mortals in times past.

- a. 📖 God the Father led Noah (Hebrews 11:7; Genesis 6:13-15; 7:5); Abraham (Hebrews 11:8, 9; Genesis 12:1-4); Israel out of Egypt (Deuteronomy 8:14, 15; 29:4, 5).

How did He lead them? By speaking to them, by their *hearing* Him, and by their *obeying* His will (Psalm 77:20).

- b. 📖 God the Son led people (John 1:43; 6:44, 45). Jesus commanded and the people *heard* and *obeyed*. There was no mysterious influence or supernatural power that compelled them to do something. Jesus used Truth and taught so they understood.
- c. 📖 God the Spirit is presently leading people (Romans 8:14). How? If it was in a manner different than that used by the Father and Son we would be told. But we are not told that anything was different. The Holy Spirit leads today in just the same manner as did the Father and the Son. Since the Holy Spirit is an intelligent Person, He speaks to

people, they *hear*, and *obey*. The Holy Spirit speaks to people today via the Scriptures (2 Thessalonians 2:14; Revelation 22:17; Hebrews 3:7). When people follow the New Testament they are being "led" by the Holy Spirit.

4. But this conclusion is disputed by those who claim the Holy Spirit operates "directly" upon them and thus "leads" them through emotional feelings and subjective thoughts.
 - a. This is due to religious error regarding the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of John Calvin is primarily responsible (we will discuss this in our last lesson). Calvin insisted that the Holy Spirit **had to work independently of the Word** because man's "original sin" prevented him from understanding the Scripture until he was "illuminated" by the Holy Spirit. This illumination would "awaken" the spiritual piety which would then allow him to comprehend God's message in the Bible.
 - b. 🛑 The Scriptures fail to support the idea that the Spirit leads in this mystical manner.

- 1) An occasioned "piety" by the Holy Spirit is not even suggested in the Scriptures.

Note: One text that is often used to support this error is **Acts 16:14**—"whose heart the Lord opened to give heed to the things spoken by Paul." It is suggested that this direct influence of the Spirit was necessary so that Lydia could hear and believe. But that is assumed! She did not need a direct operation so that she could "receive the word" for she was already listening. Her heart was opened so that she could obey the things she heard. The "opening" was made possible by the preaching of the Word.

- 2) 🛑 Dramatic experiences are not necessary for or an indicator of salvation. The experience of Cornelius was not that which brought him salvation or that which made him receptive to God's Word. He needed to send for one who would preach the Word (Acts 11:14).

- 3) In fact, the Scriptures clearly teach that one will not be "led" by the Spirit until thought and study of the Word has been given.

- a) We are urged to "reason" (Isaiah 1:18).

- b) We are "called" by the Word (2 Thessalonians 2:14).

- c) We are told that the gospel is the "power" to salvation (Romans 1:16).

- d. A failure to understand this simple point has caused many to suffer great grief. One illustration of this comes from the pioneer preacher Jacob Creath, Jr. He belonged to the Baptists who taught that a man can do nothing to be saved until something "happened" to him so that he could be saved (God had to effect a mystical experience to draw the

sinner to Him). Creath repeatedly tried to get an experience, and at times thought he had done, but the emotions soon vanished. He became disgusted and briefly tried to be an infidel, but he was too honest to be an infidel. He wrote: "I never saw the day when I did not desire to be good and please God, my Maker. I often withdrew to retired places, and prayed to him that I might see a great light shining around me, like Saul of Tarsus; or hear a voice informing me that my sins were pardoned. Under these circumstances nature sometimes gave way and I went to sleep on my knees, overwhelmed with the dreadful consideration that I was forever lost." (*Search For The Ancient Order*, Vol. 1, p. 118).

5. The leading of the Holy Spirit is discussed in the Scriptures. We will consider it under two general divisions –
 - a. How does the Holy Spirit "lead" sinners to salvation?
 - b. How does the Holy Spirit "lead" saints to godliness?
6. Consideration of how the Holy Spirit "leads" the alien sinner to salvation.
 - a. We will consider this point in greater detail as the error of Calvinism is discussed. But now we will list some of the general thoughts regarding it.
 - b. There is no doubt that the Holy Spirit is the cause of salvation (Titus 3:5, 6; John 3:3-5). But how does the Holy Spirit cause this salvation? This is the question about which many are confused.
 - 1) It cannot be through a direct operation for such has been shown to be inconsistent with Scripture and with the manner in which the Father and Son "led" mankind.
 - 2) ☞ It is via the written Word of God (The Bible). This is evident from these points.
 - a) ☞ Ephesians 2:8, 9 – Salvation is by grace through faith. Faith is the crucial factor in salvation. But how does "faith" come?
 - b) ☞ Romans 10:17 – Faith comes via God's Word.
 - c) ☞ Therefore, as man hears the Bible, he believes. The Holy Spirit thus convicts of sin. That conviction brings repentance/sorrow and a desire to reform. That reformation is seen in obedience.
 - c. ☞ The "leading" of lost souls to salvation by the Holy Spirit via the Word is illustrated in Acts. A careful study shows that the Holy Spirit converts lost souls only as the Word is preached (Acts 11:14 – "words whereby you will be saved"). This simple point is illustrated by these texts in Acts.

- 1) The 3,000 "heard" (2:37-38).
 - 2) The 5,000 "heard the word" (4:4).
 - 3) The Samaritans believed "preaching" (8:12).
 - 4) Simon "believed" also the preaching (8:13).
 - 5) The Eunuch heard Philip "preach Jesus" (8:35-38).
 - 6) Saul of Tarsus was "told what to do" (9:6).
 - 7) Cornelius would hear "words" (11:14).
 - 8) 🕊 Lydia "heard...things spoken" (16:14).
 - 9) The Jailor heard Paul "speak the Word" (16:32).
 - 10) The Corinthians "hearing, believed" (18:8).
 - 11) The Bereans "received the Word" (17:12).
 - 12) The Ephesian 12 "heard" (19:5).
- d. A direct operation of the Holy Spirit in conversion is illogical.
- 1) Why was the question of Acts 2:38 asked if the Holy Spirit mystically led them or would lead to salvation?
 - 2) Why should Scripture urge the publishing of the gospel to the lost if it is not necessary for salvation? (Romans 1:16; Mk 16:15, 16)
 - 3) Why are there lost souls still in the world? If God desires the salvation of ALL (2 Peter 3:9), why has the Holy Spirit failed to bring ALL to salvation? Is the Holy Spirit shirking His duty? Is He ineffective?
 - 4) Why does the Scripture emphasize personal choice in salvation if the Holy Spirit will "draw" one to salvation? (Isaiah 1:18-20)
- e. 🕊 The "leading" of the Holy Spirit in the alien sinner's life is summarized with these points.
- 1) Romans 1:16—God's power to save is in the gospel. The gospel must be heard if it is

to produce faith.

- 2) 📖 Acts 17:11, 12—Believers were produced when people searched the Scriptures with a readiness of mind to learn the Truth.
 - 3) 📖 1 Corinthians 4:15—The power in begetting men to a new life is the gospel message.
 - 1) 📖 James 1:18—We are brought forth by the Word of Truth.
 - 5) 📖 Matthew 13:15—To be healed, one must be converted; to be converted, one must understand with the heart; to understand with the heart, one must perceive and hear!
7. Consideration of how the Holy Spirit "leads" believers. The Holy Spirit operates in the lives of believers so they will be transformed and sanctified (Romans 12:1, 2; 15:16). There have been three ways in which the Holy Spirit has "led" Christians to these goals.

a. 📖 **Miraculous means**

When the Church was first formed there was a need for a period of miraculous leading. Thus the Holy Spirit miraculously led Paul (Acts 16), Peter (Acts 10), Philip (Acts 8) and others. But the miraculous was temporary (1 Corinthians 13:8-13) and is no longer used by the Holy Spirit.

b. 📖 **The Scriptures**

The Holy Spirit guides believers through the Scriptures: to avoid error (1 Timothy 4:1, 2); to obtain all spiritual blessings (2 Peter 1:3); to spiritual security (1 John 5:13). The Holy Spirit, as with the Father and Son, has always relied upon Truth to guide man. This Truth is found only in the New Testament. This is why the New Testament must be preached (Galatians 1:8).

To follow the New Testament is to follow the Holy Spirit; to do what the Holy Spirit teaches one to do is to do what the New Testament requires. To be guided by the New Testament is to be guided by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit leads all the same way; he does not lead one man into one church and another into another church; He leads all into the Church of our Lord. The Holy Spirit does not lead one Christian one way and lead another still another way...all Christians are led the same way; they are led to wear the same name, to worship the same way, and to develop into the likeness of Christ (Boles, p. 241).

Note: 1 Corinthians 14:33—Because the Holy Spirit leads us with the Scriptures we have an objective standard and no confusion should exist among those led by the Scripture,

only peace!

c. 🕊️ Providential Means

The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit operates in Providential means, but it has told us nothing about how He does this.

- 1) Remember that "God" is not exclusively used of the Father. At times it is used of the Holy Spirit. Thus when the Scriptures state that "God" works via providence we are to understand that this includes the Holy Spirit.
 - 2) Some ways in which the Holy Spirit works providentially: 🕊️ the creation of favorable environments by which one will be encouraged to study Scripture or listen to the teaching of another (1 Peter 3:1, 2); the opening of escape avenues when tempted (1 Corinthians 10:13); the preventing of temptations that are overpowering (Matthew 6:13); the guarding from the evil one (2 Thessalonians 3:3).
 - 3) Romans 8:28, 31, 32—God causes situations to develop which will encourage us to follow God's will. Our choices for good are in response to the Holy Spirit's "leading." There is no mystical guidance but an obedient trust in doing what the Scriptures command (Philippians 2:13).
8. Summary: The Holy Spirit does "lead" men and women today. From our study we have discovered these facts about His leading:
- a. 🕊️ God has "led" man by imparting Truth and inviting man to act upon that Truth.
 - b. Whenever man listens, reasons, and acts upon revealed Truth it can be said that he is "led" by God.
 - c. The miraculous "leading," where the Holy Spirit operated directly upon man's choices, was only temporary and no longer exists.
 - d. The instructional ministry of the Spirit, by which He utilized Scripture to convict and convert, is still being used by the Spirit to "lead" man (Hebrews 3:7—"saith" is in the present tense, hence "the Spirit continues to say." This is also indicated in Hebrews 10:15).
 - e. Thus the Holy Spirit leads us today with the Scriptures. Those who follow the Scriptures are those who are following the lead of the Holy Spirit!